National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et
des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

NOTICE

The quality of this microform is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Reproduction in full or in part of this microform is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30, and subsequent amendments.

AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

La reproduction, même partielle, de cette microforme est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30, et ses amendements subséquents.

Canada

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

EARLY SCHOOLING: A TAPESTRY FOR LIFE

BY

©

EMMA BRINSON

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION.

DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Edmonton, Alberta

FALL, 1992

National Library
of Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Canadian Theses Service

Service des thèses canadiennes

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0N4

The author has granted an irrevocable non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of his/her thesis by any means and in any form or format, making this thesis available to interested persons.

L'auteur a accordé une licence irrévocable et non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de sa thèse de quelque manière et sous quelque forme que ce soit pour mettre des exemplaires de cette thèse à la disposition des personnes intéressées.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in his/her thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège sa thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

ISBN 0-315-77265-4

Canadä

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

RELEASE FORM

NAME OF AUTHOR: **Emma Brinson**

TITLE OF THESIS: **Early Schooling: A Tapestry For Life**

DEGREE: **Master of Education**

YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED: **Fall, 1992**

Permission is hereby granted to the University of Alberta Library to reproduce single copies of this thesis and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly or scientific research purposes only.

The author reserves all other publications and other rights in association with the copyright in the thesis, and except as hereinbefore provided neither the thesis nor any substantial portion thereof may be printed or otherwise reproduced in any material form whatever without the author's prior written permission.

Emma Brinson

7734-80 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
T6C 0S4

October 9, 1992

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled EARLY SCHOOLING: A TAPESTRY FOR LIFE submitted by EMMA BRINSON in partial fulfillment for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION.

Janis Blakey

Dr. Janis Blakey

Dr. Myer Horowitz

Dr. Al MacKay

September 24, 1992

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to:

My Mom, whose unconditional love and support has been and continues to be ever present in all aspects of my life;

My mentors, the late Pearl Turner and Kathleen Manning, who have provided me, personally and professionally, with powerful guiding lights;

My friends Janice, Peter, Zachary and Daniel Ayotte, George, Sara, Lauren Barr and Sue Bard, who so generously, in many ways, contributed to the "Brinson's Masters"; and to

My former colleagues, students, parents and senior administration who shared and experienced the vision of Banyan Tree School.

ABSTRACT

Children spend many years in school engaged in the process of acquiring an education. What meaning do they get out of those years? What do they take with them into other aspects of their lives? Reifel (1988) states that "what children know about their experience can be seen as an index of the meaning that experience has for them; it can provide us with their understanding of the program and experience we (teachers) intend for them to have" (p. 62). Conversational research was used to probe as deeply as possible to discover the meaning of the early school experience.

This qualitative study presents an exploration of the meaning of the early school experience for four students who attended Banyan Tree School. These students' views give us insights into what the early school years were like for them and what influence they had on them as people and learners. They attended this child-centered, play-based, integrated program for the first 4 - 5 years of their schooling. A former student of this school often reflected on his early school experiences saying, "I'm so glad that I went to Banyan Tree School. There I learned how to learn and how to think". He went on to say that throughout his junior and senior high school years he compared himself to other students who had not had the same early school experiences. He noted that there were differences in their approaches to learning. What were those early experiences that made the difference? The students' parents were also a part of the study. They were able to bring to it their perspectives of their child's early school experiences.

The metaphor of weaving is chosen for this study as it easily portrays the intricacies of the students' experience. The weavers (students, parents, and teacher) in the study have woven tapestries each of which depict the meaning of their early schooling. Although these tapestries vary in texture, color, and complexity, five dominant patterns are evident in them. These common patterns constitute the major findings of this study. They are: a wholistic view of learning incorporating the nature of

children and how they learn, the role of the teacher in children's learning, socialization in learning, transition from Banyan Tree School to other schools, and parental involvement. Discovering the power of early school experiences for children has important implications for people who walk the various pathways in the field of education.

PREFACE

In my dialogues with Denise, a former student, she used the metaphor of a tree to describe the basic structure of her learning during the years she attended the school described in this study. As we grappled for an appropriate pseudonym for the school she said, "It's more than just a tree. The school experience allowed us to really branch out and continue to grow." Momentary silence engulfed us as we pondered this comment. Then I ventured, "like a banyan tree--a tree whose branches send roots to the ground that become new trunks?" "Yes, that's it--Banyan Tree School."

The reader is invited to journey into Banyan Tree School to discover its underlying philosophy and to share in the reflections of the participants, the weavers in this study. As you journey along you may wish to reflect on your own early school experiences and perhaps uncover where they have taken you and how your journey is similar to, or different from, the participants in this study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My most sincere thanks and appreciation are expressed to all those who have helped in the realization of this thesis. Special thanks are due to:

The former students and their parents, who so willingly participated as the "weavers" in this study;

Dr. Janis Blakey, my advisor, who enthusiastically and unfailingly nurtured, encouraged, and guided me through all stages of my Master's program;

Dr. Myer Horowitz, for giving of his valuable time, input, and encouragement;

Dr. Al MacKay, for encouraging me in the early stages of this study, and for his valuable time and input at the end of it;

Dr. Joyce Boorman, for challenging my thinking in the writing of this thesis, for taking the time to read and edit it, and for her ongoing inspiration, support and encouragement.

My family, for their love, and support and encouragement throughout my Master's journey--our visits will once more be longer and more frequent;

Eveline Audy, who so generously gave hours of her time to transcribe the conversations of my pilot study, and for her ongoing encouragement and support;

Carol Vaage, my reader, for giving hours of her time to read through the transcripts, keeping me on track in the analysis of the data, and for her constant support and encouragement.

Margaret McMullin, my accurate and patient typist and friend, who was always there giving encouragement. Thanks for the many cups of tea and popcorn as we worked into the wee hours of the morning;

Jim McMullin, for his computer expertise and his encouragement.

My many wonderful friends, who encouraged me through the challenging time and laughed with me through the joyous times of completing this thesis, therefore, helping me to fulfill a dream; and to

My special feline friend, Kittywinks, that was always there for cuddles when the journey got rough, and encouraged me to take breaks when she sprawled out on the table directly on top of writing.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER PAGE

I WARPING THE LOOM 1
- Patterns of Children 2
- A Reason to Weave 3

II VIEWING THE TAPESTRY OF A SCHOOL. 4
- The Warp of Banyan Tree School 7
  - Historical Review of the Warp 11
- Creating Patterns of Meaning 19
- My Own Tapestry 22

III A WAY TO WEAVE 27
- Designing a Weave for the Study 28
- Checking the Quality of the Weft Threads for Each Tapestry 33

IV WEAVING OF THE TAPESTRIES 35
- Denise's Tapestry 35
  - Learning 39
    - Enhancement of and its complexities. 39
    - Proper setting in learning. 41
    - Structure in learning. 43
  - Role of the Teacher 49
    - Setting up the environment. 50
    - Making decisions and assuming responsibility. 51
  - Development of an Individual 54
    - Divergency in learning. 55
    - Individuals rates of development. 57
    - Socialization in learning. 58
    - Pursuing interests and active involvement. 63
  - Parental Involvement 65
  - Transition from Banyan Tree School to Other Schools 69
  - Final Reflections 69
- Barton's Tapestry 71
  - Frustration in Learning 73
  - Pursuing Interests 74
  - Transition to Another School 75
  - Mobility in Learning 75
  - Socialization in Learning 76
  - Final Reflections 77
- Tarren's Tapestry 77
  - Feelings About Banyan Tree School 81
  - Structure in Learning 82
  - Socialization in Learning 84

        - Tables versus desk learning. 85
        - Reducing sex-role differences. 86
        - Acceptance and valuing each other. 87
        - Bonding between former classmates. 88
    - Role of the Teacher 89
        - Making decisions. 91
        - Pursuing interests and active involvement in learning. 92
    - Final Reflections 96
- Michael's Tapestry 97
    - Reflections on the Classroom and the Projects 100
    - An Approach to Learning 102
    - Interest 109
    - Role of the Teacher 116
    - Learning Wholistically 118
    - Transition from Banyan Tree School to Other Schools 123
    - Final Reflections 124
- Dominant Patterns in the Tapestries 125

V EXAMINING THE TEXTURES OF THE TAPESTRIES 127

- My Reflections: The Weavers and Their Tapestries 129
- A Closer Examination of Five Patterns in the Tapestries 132
    - A Wholistic View of Learning 133
    - Role of the Teacher 136
    - Socialization in Learning 140
    - Transition from Banyan Tree School to Other Schools 145
    - Parental Involvement 148
- Implications of the Patterns in the Four Tapestries 149
    - Learning and the Role of the Teacher 150
        - Implications for teachers and administrators. 152
        - Implications for curriculum planners. 152
        - Implications for teacher educators. 153
        - Implications for parents. 154
    - Socialization in Learning 155
        - Implications for educators. 155
    - Transition from Banyan Tree School to Other Schools 156
        - Implications for curriculum planners, teachers, and school jurisdictions. 156
    - Parent Involvement 157
        - Implications for administrators and teachers. 157
- Concluding Reflections 157
- Suggestions for Further Research 158

REFERENCES 159

APPENDIX A 164

APPENDIX B

CHAPTER ONE

Warping the Loom

Since ancient times weavers have interwoven threads of various textures to create patterns and have used color to breathe life into them. The warp and weft threads control the design while "the quality of the weaving is determined by color, texture, space, line, shape, and rhythm. No one of these stands alone; all work together to form a harmonious whole" (Rainey, 1977, p. 6).

The metaphor of weaving is chosen for this study as it seems to convey the intricacies of the student's experiences. "It is as though the ability to comprehend experience through metaphor were a sense, like seeing or touching or hearing, with metaphors providing the only warp to perceive and experience much of the world" (Lakoff & Johnson, cited in Reynolds, p. 21, 1990).

Warping a loom is a very challenging task--it's an art in itself. So is the development of a program for young children. It takes time, energy, persistence, careful planning, thought, and a willingness to take risks. Warping is a complex procedure that forms the underlying structure of the weaving.

In learning to warp, one learns about the parts of the loom; in this case essential components of a child-centered program and how these components work to ensure that children remain its central focus. The pattern of the program is skillfully woven thread by thread, decision by decision. Theories relating to how children develop and how they learn are woven into practice.

Patterns of Children

Early in September each year school doors open and students, young and old, cross over the threshold into a new classroom experience. Some students hesitantly shuffle over this threshold; others, with animated faces, bound across; while still others walk across ready to take things as they come. There is a tingle of excitement in the air. Anticipation of the unknown abounds. Teachers and students survey each other--each one unique in their own right, yet the permutations and combinations of their lives will be woven together in an intricate pattern. How will this pattern change as the year unfolds? Only time will tell. Each child offers so much to the world of the classroom. A discerning teacher will realize this and try to draw out the special uniqueness of each child. This discernment is beautifully illustrated in a story about Michelangelo pushing a huge rock down the street.

> A curious neighbour sitting lazily on the porch of his house called to him (Michelangelo) and inquired why he laboured so over an old piece of stone. Michelangelo is reported to have answered, "Because there is an angel in that rock that wants to come out. (O'Connor, cited in Boorman, p. 3, 1987)

Children, like the angel in the rock, are complex and fascinating people who are struggling to become their own person. Throughout my teaching career they have been, and will continue to be, a great inspiration. For 11 years I had the privilege of living and learning with children, aged five to ten years of age, in a small school where the staff offered a child-centered, play based, integrated program. This environment was rich and stimulating for me. In its richness I grew and developed both personally and professionally.

A Reason to Weave

The warp is set to weave complex patterns that reveal the world of meaning of the early school experience of four young adults who, as children, attended Banyan Tree School. Each former student's experience is unique but at the same time some commonalities exist. The unique and common experiences will form the weft threads woven through the warp to create tapestries of early schooling. Weft threads, from the perceptions of the parents of the four former students, are carefully woven into the tapestries. The color and texture of the threads and the weavers (students, parents and teacher) interact as the tapestry is woven. A research approach that uncovers or reveals the threads underlying the recollections of early schooling is also explored.

Discovering the power of children's early school experiences can have great implications for the people who journey along the pathways of education. This study may shed light on some of the authentic attributes of education in the early years.

CHAPTER TWO

Viewing the Tapestry of a School

Warp threads of a weaving are, for the most part, preset and remain constant, however, they can be loosely structured and prepared for maximum flexibility. Thus warp establishes the intentionality or the underlying philosophical base of a school, yet does not determine the end result. Allowances, therefore, are made for interactions as children's ever changing needs and interests are accommodated in the pulsating life of the classroom. Let's take a look at such a school.

It is around 8:30 am., a door opens and footsteps are heard coming down the hallway. It is not long before more footsteps are heard accompanied by voices chattering on about something that distance prevents one from hearing. Soon the footsteps and voices come closer and then you hear "Hi, teacher!" or "Good morning, Miss Hughson. Guess what happened last night?" and the story unfolds. As each child or group of children enter the classroom, greetings are exchanged with the teacher and with each other. Some children find a place to sit for a chat, while others start building a structure in the block area or find a game to play, others go off to read a book. By 9:00 am., when the bell rings, most of the children are already engaged in some kind of activity in the classroom. These activities are either put away or left out, depending on their location, and the children assemble on their respective rugs.

The classroom is a large room which had been two regular sized classrooms before a partial wall was knocked out. Two female teachers, in a team teaching situation, and upwards to 60 children "live" together in this environment. Different areas for art, block play, math, language arts, science, reading, house play, and so forth, are set up throughout the classroom. Materials appropriate to the area are set out on shelves, tables, and racks.

Within a few minutes, after the bell rings, these five, six, and seven year old children are involved with their teacher in a sharing time. Special interests of the children or teacher are shared, roll call is taken (usually by a child), and the daily log (basic responsibilities in which the children will become involved at some time during the day) is reviewed. After a brief consultation with their teacher, each child is off to become involved in some activity or project found around the classroom. For the rest of the morning the children and teachers have an open block of time at their disposal. A 15 minute recess, about mid morning, occurs during this time. During the open block of time the children group and regroup themselves according to their interests. They budget their time between those responsibilities outlined in their daily log for math, social studies, science, language arts, art, and other activities found in the classroom. Older and younger children become involved in (or alongside) each other in these activities. A busy hum is heard as a hive of activity is seen around the classroom--each person is intent on what he/she has chosen to do. But where are the teachers? Ah, there is one - playing a game on the rug with a child. The other one is involved with a group of children in the block area building a structure. The teachers move freely from child to child or group to group throughout the morning's open block of time. As they do this, their senses are alert to cues that they might pick up from the children. These cues will inform the teachers of each child's progress and the interests that may arise from the children's spontaneous play. These interests will be developed as they become apart of the program's emergent curriculum.

It seems the morning has just started but now it rapidly draws to a close. The children assume responsibilities for tidying up the classroom and have a short sharing time before lunch. At this time projects, stories, and further plans are shared among the children and their teacher. Lunch time arrives and the children are dismissed--some stay for lunch while others go home.

After lunch the children return to the classroom and eagerly get involved in much the same way as they did in the morning. The bell rings, activities are put away and the children gather on the rug with their teacher for a story. It is now only the six and seven year olds who have assembled as the five year olds do not return in the afternoon. The afternoon program offers the children other kinds of activities--physical education, music, social science and French. The children have physical education every day, music twice a week, and French and social science activities three times a week. The children spend the remaining time pursuing a great variety of activities similar to those they experienced in the morning.

Another school day will soon be over. Things are put away and the children assemble once again with their teacher for a final sharing time which focuses on plans for the next day. Many discoveries, explorations, and reciprocal learning experiences have been packed into the day.

The above scenarios describe a typical day with the children at Banyan Tree School. In this program the teachers and the children assume different roles as they interact with each other in the world of the classroom. The children become active learners who are encouraged to assume responsibility for themselves, for others, and for their own learning. They are given opportunities to become independent in their study habits and in their thinking-divergence in their thinking is fostered. Finally, the children are involved in becoming decision makers. Decisions have to be made about which activities and projects will be pursued as well as how and when they will be done.

The teachers, on the other hand, are no longer the central sources of information. Rather, they are preparers and providers of materials and resources, participants in the children's play, sources of guidance when specific skills or facts are needed, questioners, listeners, observers, facilitators and, most important of all, reciprocal learners in the learning process.

The Warp of Banyan Tree School

At the heart of the educational process lies the child. No advances in policy, no acquisitions of new equipment have their desired effect unless they are in harmony with the needs of children. Healthy children are active, curious, creative, fun-loving, imaginative, trustful, innovative, spontaneous, open, perceptive, intrinsically motivated people who learn best through play and active involvement. Such direct participation in concrete situations is basic to the development of problem solving skills, creative and critical thinking as well as the acquisition of a store house of concepts for present and future use. Hence, play has a major role in children's cognitive, social, physical, creative, cultural, and emotional development. Play is complex and is an invaluable medium for learning. For Pratt (1987) play has this significance.

> Child's play is a fragile butterfly--[a] thing of beauty and wonder to observe, appreciate and cherish, but which is easily injured by attempts to capture, contain, or change it. Through the wonders of play, a child may flit from blossom to blossom, collecting knowledge, wisdom and self satisfaction as nectar, sweet to the taste. Or, a child may immerse himself completely in the sweetness of the moment, enriching his life with experiences, deep and satisfying. Fantasy and reality are at his fingertips, and he visits each spontaneously. As intricate and detailed as the pattern on the butterfly's wing is the child's growth and development through play. (p. 4)

Play should be a vital part of a school's program (Plowden, 1967; Herron & Sutton-Smith, 1971; Roberts, 1971; Caplan & Caplan, 1973; Sponseller, 1974; Markun, 1974; Cherry, 1976; Garvey, 1977; Pluckrose, 1979; Strom, 1981; Manning & Sharp, 1983; Bredekamp, 1987; Johnson, Christie & Yawkey, 1987; Katz & Chard, 1989).

During the 11 years I taught at Banyan Tree School, play was an integral part of the program. This play was carefully "structured" (Manning & Sharp, 1983) to insure that children learn from their involvement. According to Manning and Sharp, when structuring children's play, "we (teachers) must look at it (play) through 'adult's eyes' to see all the learning that is possible; we must look at it through 'children's eyes' to structure it in such a way that it is accepted by the children" (p. 17).

In children's play the provision and structuring of materials, time, space and rules (Manning & Sharp, 1983) are critical. The wide range of materials used in the program at Banyan Tree School were carefully selected for their learning potential, open-endedness, and appropriateness to the children's interests and developmental needs.

Children need freedom to learn in an environment where there are few time restraints. It is difficult to assess just how long any one child might need to play with a particular material, explore an idea or complete a required assignment. Therefore, Banyan Tree School offered open blocks of time which both the children and teachers learned to budget wisely. Having these large blocks of time also prevented the fragmentation of learning which can occur when time is rigidly scheduled.

Children's learning, like their development, is integrated. That is, they do not categorize their learning into subject areas. This being the case, the staff at Banyan Tree School provided projects, within the open time blocks, that allowed for the integration of the curriculum. For example, one day we, a group of five, six, and seven year olds and I, read the story, The Three Little Pigs. Following the story the children decided that they wanted to construct the three little pigs' houses. Three huge cardboard boxes were provided and each house was constructed in turn. The first house was covered with real straw, the second one had real sticks wired onto it, while the third little pig's house was made out of red construction paper bricks and mortar (gray paint). After the exterior of each house was completed and a roof put on, the children decided the walls needed to be wallpapered, curtains had to be made for the windows, and the floors needed to be carpeted.

Constructing the three little pig's houses became the vehicle for integrating many subject areas: reading, mathematics, science, social studies, and art as well fostering the development of many skills. "Skills of reading and writing or the techniques used in art and craft can best be taught when the need for them is evident to children" (Plowden, 1967, p. 195). The project was sustained by the children over several weeks as it gained in size, power and momentum. New directions for the construction remained open for the children at all times. After the houses and other related aspects of this project were finished, the children played in the houses enacting the story many times. Such flexible use of time and materials enabled the children to follow through on their discoveries, work out their problems, develop perseverance, increase their attention span, make inquiries, and generally use their time effectively.

As our need for space grew and shrunk, it reinforced how important structuring space for play becomes. Play can be inhibited if insufficient space is available while more imaginative play will develop if adequate space is provided. Hence, as children became involved in their play the staff would enlarge or decrease space as the need arose.

Finally, the rules created by both the children and the teachers impose another form of structure on play. In the program at Banyan Tree School both the teachers and children became involved in making rules that were in the best interests of everyone involved.

Children are actors on the stage of life. Each one, acting out his/her roles, is as unique as a snowflake that falls from the sky. Educators need to continue to take this uniqueness into account when planning programs which meet the developmental levels of children. The varying patterns and timing of growth, as well as individual personalities, learning styles, and family backgrounds have major implications for creating a child-centered program. Such a program emerges from the specific and ever-changing needs and interests of the individuals involved. Teachers who are true educators know how children develop and are able to treat their class like a river--some parts are swift, others slow. The teachers recognize occasionally outcroppings will change the direction of the stream and stagnant pools need only the correct dredging to make them join the stream again.

Every attempt was made by the staff at Banyan Tree School to look at children developmentally and to plan the program with attention to their varying needs, interests, and developmental levels. An emergent curriculum evolved as the children and teacher engaged in making their school environment one that was happy, interactive, safe, secure, and challenging. Inherent in the program was a basic trust in children along with a belief in them and a faith in their very being.

Stephens' (1974) words about open education illustrate the preset but flexible warp of the program at Banyan Tree School.

> The curriculum of the open classroom is designed to involve the child, to touch him, to encourage him to become responsible for his learning. It is a flexible dynamic curriculum forged in interaction between teachers and children. Teachers bring to curriculum development a general knowledge of areas to be included and skills appropriate for certain age groups, plus their own previous experiences and interests.... Children in turn help to shape their curricula by their reactions to materials, their changing needs, their blossoming interests. The open curriculum is thus both planned and unplanned. It is planned in the sense that teachers do not simply drift from day to day, waiting for things to happen. The environment is carefully constructed, materials are chosen to provide particular experiences, lessons are planned in response to individual and group needs. Yet the curriculum can also be unplanned in the sense that directions are not always prescribed. There is room for unforeseen

> explorations. A teacher may provide the spark, but, once the fire of learning has been lit in a child, it may burn in many directions. (p. 123)

The warp of Banyan Tree School enabled the students and teachers to be reciprocally engaged in the learning process.

Historical Review of the Warp

Banyan Tree School's philosophy (warp) is grounded in the literature. Because the tapestry of the history of education is extraordinarily complex; many textures, colors, patterns are intricately interwoven together. To gain knowledge of the warp threads that illuminate Banyan Tree School's philosophical base, we need to look at individuals throughout history who have contributed to it. The writings of Ulich (1945 & 1961) are drawn upon extensively in this historical review. Quintilean, a Roman orator, (35 - 95 AD) was a humanist at heart and possessed a high appreciation of human individuality. He advocated that "a variety of subjects, a more diversified and at the same time interconnected curriculum would stimulate the child and the educative process" (Ulich, 1945, p. 57). In one of the humanist periods of history, Erasmus (1466-1536) recognized that "play for the child was not only a relaxation or pleasure but a part of his life and learning" (Ulich, 1945, p. 146). He too realized the importance of individual differences in a child and acknowledged that a teacher must respect these differences.

The 17th century was the beginning of an age of enlightenment in the development of educational method. This was an era where scholars, philosophers, and educators had a great desire "to investigate the quality of mental growth and learning and to apply findings systematically to practical education" (Ulich, 1945, p. 180). At this time many of them built upon the foundation of educational thought laid down by earlier scholars, philosophers, and educators. Comenius (1592-1670), a theologian of the

Moravian Brethren, added significantly to these earlier thinkers. His educational principles stated that children should be taught through the medium of their senses and that children should be led from the known and concrete to the more remote and difficult.

For Rousseau (1712-1778), "education was nothing less than an essential part of his revolutionary plan to lead mankind from absolutism and authoritarianism toward freedom and independence" (Ulich, 1961, p. 383). At this time children were no longer considered to be miniature adults.

> Humanity has its place in the order and constitution of things ... men should be considered as men and children as children. Nature requires children to be children before they are men.... Childhood hath its manner of seeing perceiving, and thinking, peculiar to itself; nor is there anything more absurd than our being anxious to substitute our own in its stead. (Ulich, 1961, p. 397)

Rousseau's educational methods focussed on fostering in children a desire to learn. "The grand motive (of this desire), indeed the only one that is certain and effectual, is present interest" (Ulich, 1961, p. 405). Nature and the young child, time for learning and questions were paramount in Rousseau's ideas.

> Direct the attention of your pupil to the phaenomena [sic] of nature, and you will soon awaken his curiosity; but to keep that curiosity alive, you must be in no haste to satisfy it. Put questions to him adapted to his capacity, and leave him to resolve them.... When he asks a question, be your answer always calculated rather to keep alive than satisfy his curiosity. (Ulich, 1961, p. 408-409)

Pestalozzi (1746-1827) was greatly influenced by Rousseau. His ideals reflected the need for teachers to consider the whole child and to provide children with positive, first hand learning experiences that are indispensable for their overall health and welfare. Children's interests were also to be nurtured and encouraged. Pestalozzi also believed that teachers should follow, " 'the road of Nature' without leading the child away from his own real world into a world of words" (Ulich, 1945, p. 262) that holds no meaning.

The natural life of children and learning must be connected with ideas which are either of interest or of potential interest to them. Interest was a prominent in aspect of Hubart's (1776-1841) beliefs. It is critical in enabling children to understand and assimilate new ideas into their ever broadening world. "Strong interest supports the association between the new experience and those earlier experiences which have already dropped into the subconscious" (Ulich, 1945, p. 276). How a child was instructed must be in harmony with the child's mental capacity and personality. Therefore, instruction must be in tune with the individual and society. For Hubart,

> There arises for the teacher on the one hand, the obligation to cultivate the interests of the child, in order to stimulate his spontaneity, on the other hand, the need not only to cultivate the child's personal interests but to introduce him to the variety of human knowledge and experiences, in order to help him in the appreciation of the fundamental values of civilized societies. (Ulich, 1945, p. 278)

Froebel (1782-1852) created a new concept of childhood as he maintained that "childhood is not just a transition toward adulthood, and child's play not just a preparation for the activities of a mature person, but are in themselves something complete and organic" (Ulich, 1961, p. 523). Humanity and nature were closely interwoven in Froebel's believes and there was a tremendous unity between the inner and outer lives of children and how they were taught. It was the responsibility of the educator "to lead the child through such situations as will help him to relate his experiences organically one with another" (Ulich, 1945, p. 279). Through this approach an educator would awaken the child from within and reveal to him the power he has in his ability to learn. Froebel advocated play to be in the lives of children.

> Play is the highest phase of child-development--of human development at this period (of childhood), for it is self-active representation of ... inner necessity and impulse.... Play at this time is not trivial, it is highly serious and of deep significance. (Ulich, 1961, p. 573)

Froebel also believed in the natural unfolding of a child through various stages of development. He maintained that "the adequate development of the child ... at each preceding stage can effect and bring about adequate development at each succeeding stage" (Ulich, 1961, p. 567). The importance of the early experiences of childhood in relation to the future development of personality was also of significance to Froebel. He was one of the inspirers of modern progressive education.

Dewey (1859-1952) believed that children, as concrete learners, need to be actively engaged in activities that are of interest to them. Dewey (1959) states in his pedagogic creed that,

> Interests are the signs and symptoms of growing power ... that represent dawning capacities.... These interests are to be observed (by the educator) as showing the state of development which the child has reached.... Only through the continual and sympathetic observation of childhood's interest can the adult enter into the child's life and see what it is ready for, and upon what material it could work most readily and fruitfully. (Dworkin, p. 29)

Children's learning is fluid, ever-changing and must be fused together within a context of understanding. The educator must discover the conditions where children's learning will naturally and necessarily take place. Organic connections between children and their learning must be a part of their every day school experience. "All studies arise from aspects of the one earth and the one life lived upon it.... When the child lives in varied but concrete and active relationship to this common world, his studies are naturally unified" (Dworkin, 1959, p. 88).

Integral parts of Dewey's beliefs were the human factors of social relationships, communication, respect for individual differences, cooperation, as well as the need for self-initiated and self-conducted learning. These were an integral part of what became known as the progressive education movement.

Whitehead (1957), a prominent English philosopher, wrote.

> Students are alive, and the purpose of education is to stimulate and guide their self-development.... In training a child to activity of thought, above all things we must beware of what I will call "inert ideas"--that is to say, ideas that are merely received into the mind without being utilized, or tested, or thrown into fresh combinations. (p.v)

Whatever is taught to children must be important to them and offered to them in every possible combination. The consequent learning becomes an integral part of them and is able to be applied within the content of their lives.

> What education has to import is an intimate sense for the power of ideas, for the beauty of ideas, and for the structure of ideas, together with a particular knowledge which has peculiar reference to the life of the being possessing it. (Whitehead, 1957 p. 12)

Whitehead (1957) also wrote about three stages of mental growth: the stage of romance, the stage of precision, and the stage of generalization. The stage of romance is characterized by an active exploration and discovery of knowledge rather than by a systematic procedure. Throughout the stage of precision the knowledge gained through the stage of romance is fitted together in a precise, systematic order. This stage is completely meaningless without the stage of romance. Finally, evolves the stage of generalization is the outgrowth of the two previous stages. Whitehead contends that these stages, or cycles, must be woven throughout the educative process.

The aforementioned educators, ideals, and principles became the foundation of modern education and were an integral part of Banyan Tree School's philosophical base--its warp threads.

The Plowden Report, which was a study of the British primary schools, reaffirmed what the earlier liberal educators had advocated. The warp of Banyan Tree School was greatly influenced, reinforced, and further developed by the recommendations of this report and the British primary school movement of the 1970's. The report noted "that the freer approaches to the teaching of young children which were being practiced in our (British) schools provided the sort of starting point all children needed and deserved" (Pluckrose, 1979, p. 156). Imbued in the very core of the philosophy that Plowden (1967) represented is the child.

> Children need to be themselves, to live with other children and with grown-ups, to learn from their environment, to enjoy the present, to get ready for the future, to create, to love, to learn to face adversity, to behave responsibly, in a word, to be human beings. (p. 188)

Three aspects of the warp of Banyan Tree School that were particularly enhanced by the Plowden Report were: play as an important part of a more informal approach to learning, multi-age or family grouping, and the development of an integrated day. In relation to play, Plowden (1967) states that,

> Child's play at any given moment contains many elements. The layers of meaning may include a highly conscious organization of the environment, exploration of physical and social relationships and an expression of the deepest levels of fantasy. Wide ranging and satisfying play is a means of learning, a powerful stimulus to learning, and a way to free learning by distortion by the emotions. (p. 194)

Through play, children are able to discover their learning in meaningful and natural ways. Play became a significant aspect of the warp of Banyan Tree School.

In Banyan Tree school, multi-age grouping was initially a function of demographic factors beyond its control. However, as the program evolved and as we learned more about its merits we purposely set up multi-age groupings of five to seven and eight to ten year olds. We believed, as did a teacher in a British Infant School, that,

> This more flexible organization provided a more natural and relaxed atmosphere where the children of varied ages are able to learn from one another as well as from me, and where too they were able to work at their own pace and to their full capacity. (Rogers, 1971, p. 37)

Goodlad (1984a) goes on to remind us that "teaching another is one of the most effective ways to acquire mastery" (p. 297). Further to these cognitive views of multi-age grouping, Katz, Evangelou and Hartman (1990) point out its affective benefits.

> Multi-age grouping compels educators to organize learning activities and the curriculum so that individuals and small groups of children can undertake different kinds of work along side one another, and so that individuals can make different contributions to the group's efforts.... invites cooperation and other forms of prosocial behavior and appears to minimize competitive pressures on children, discipline problems that seem inherent in competitive environments are often substantially reduced.... a class ethos marked by caring rather than competitiveness; the classroom culture is more likely to be characterized by helpfulness and magnanimity on the part of those able and expected to assist those who are less able. (pp. 4-5)

Generally, multi-age grouping brought to Banyan Tree School a greater degree of openendedness of materials, relationships, and learning experiences for all concerned.

Closely intertwined with multi-age grouping is the integrated day--a day which breaks from the traditional barriers of rigid timetabling and distinction of subjects. "The children's interests and needs are the determining factor, not the timetable and subjects"

(Brown & Precious, 1969, p. 57). A looser, more informal organization of the day allows both children and teachers greater freedom in their movements around the classroom, more spontaneous and natural conversation, wider choice of activities, and less fragmentation of their learning. This approach also allows children to be actively versus passively engaged in their learning. Thus "the children's minds (are) engaged in ways that deepen their understanding of their own experiences and environment" (Katz & Chard, 1989, p. 4). Engaged in these ways children can have a much greater impact on their learning--a much more humanistic approach (Goodlad, Klein & Associates, 1970, 1974; Goodlad, Klein, Novotney & Tye, 1974; Goodlad, 1984a). By humanizing the school experience it becomes a meaningful extension of the home experience which was so strongly advocated by (Dworkin, 1959). This humanization of the educative process means "making knowledge and the ways of knowing accessible to human beings and helping individuals relate that knowledge to their way of life, to their interests, to their concerns" (Goodlad, 1984b, taped address to Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development). Every attempt was made to give the program of Banyan Tree School a texture--something that the children, teachers, and parents could feel; something that was intrinsically satisfying.

As one ponders what was achieved by the warp of the school, Katz and Chard (1989) point out "the critical developmental question for educators is what children should do that best serves their development in the long term" (p. 20). This applies to all important types of learning experienced in the early years. The whole notion of the "delayed impact ... the way that early experience may affect later functioning, particularly with respect to affective and personality development" (Radke-Yarrow, cited in Katz & Chard, 1989, p. 18) needs also to be considered. From these considerations arises questions concerning the long-term meaning and significance of school experiences in the formative years of school.

Creating Patterns of Meaning

It seems that in reviewing historical research in education (Finkelstein, 1984), the history of childhood and the history of education have been treated as two separate and unrelated fields of study when they should be very closely connected. Hiner (cited in Finkelstein, 1984) states:

> What the history of childhood seemed to suggest was that educational historians would do well to pay systematic attention to the evolution of children and youth, not only because the lives of the young are important in themselves, but because the systematic study of children and youth promised to add new dimensions to our understanding of educational history. (p. 22)

Gaffield (1986) confirms this view and goes on to say,

> One of the most neglected but important topics is undoubtedly the history of students.... Research has not yet fully focussed on the ways in which educational change has actually affected instructional settings.... Research on the actual experience of schooling calls for a quite different unit of analysis than has been common in the social history studies of recent years. Rather than families and communities, the appropriate focus would be specific classrooms (p. 116)

and on children themselves.

Mishler (1979) says that most of the research done to date on children's school experiences has been based on the quantitative paradigm. He goes on to say the major concerns of these studies is that they,

> Tempt researchers to restrict the focus of their interest to short-run events and a limited range of meanings, thus, methods tend to determine the problem investigated rather than the other way around. Walker and

> Adelman urge more attention by researchers to the long-term meaning of classroom events, an understanding of which requires information on wider social and personal contexts. (p. 7)

Cullingford (1991) adds,

> Most people, even educational researchers, agree that research on children's learning has been disappointing, even when it has not been completely missing. Apart from the general lack of a "scholarly" educational tradition, the inadequacies of such study come about because of the fear of approaching such a complex area as children's inner lives. (in Forward, no page number)

However, even though little research has been done in this area Reifel, (1988) maintains that even very young children are able to formulate an understanding of those events which have given a framework to their lives. On the other hand, older children who are more mature are able to articulate an even more elaborate understanding and meaning of this structure. There is some evidence that this understanding may even be used to guide their behavior. Reifel goes on to say, "What children know about their experiences can be seen as an index of the meaning that experience has for them; it can provide us with their understanding of the programs and experience we intend for them to have" (p. 62).

Tyler (1986) discusses at length the complexity involved in meaning. It is certainly true that objects and experiences in an environment do not have the same meaning for all people. Each person will take away from an experience his/her perceived meaning of it. Educators must be particularly aware of this. We cannot assume that all children in a classroom will attach the same meaning to their experiences. However, children need to be given an opportunity to share their perceptions of what the school experience was/is for them.

> The desire to learn is allied to a discriminating sense of what is being expected of them. Their insights into the nature of schooling are revealing

> The desire to learn is allied to a discriminating sense of what is being expected of them. Their insights into the nature of schooling are revealing and deserve to be taken into account. Children are not just the recipients of the curriculum, but have clear ideas about what is successful in its delivery. They are the ones who are most closely interested in matters of discipline and school organization. Their clear and articulate views can give us insights into what it is like to be in school, and how well schools are working.... The children who are in school reveal their shared experiences in a way that has important implications. This is not only because of the insights children offer about their learning, or because they are revealing an area of their inner worlds which is rarely explored. It is because their statements have implications on policy, on how schools are organized, and how teachers manage their classrooms.... They know, better than anyone, which teaching styles are successful, which techniques of learning bring the best out of them, and what the ethos of the school consists of. (Cullingford, 1991, p. 2)

Questions surrounding children's school experiences over the short term or the long term continue to pile up. How do children acquire attitudes about themselves, their schooling, about society? What do children expect from their school experience? What do they take from it? How do they view the curriculum?

Tyler (1986) identifies the following four "new" goals and implications for curriculum development.

> 1. Students develop an attitude toward self, others, and the world which is hopeful, purposeful, competent, and devoted.... Teacher attitudes toward and interactions with students are key factors in helping students achieve the goal of attitudes and feelings toward themselves,

> 2. The development of thinking (to enable students to handle issues and problems vital to their lives particularly during the adolescent years).
> 3. To acquire an understanding of self and how it has developed ... understanding the self in all aspects has never been set forth as a serious goal of schooling.
> 4. The development of the imagining, feeling, playing qualities of the mind.... Opportunities to encourage imagination, feelings, and playfulness in all subjects must be available. (p. 55-56)

Self reflection on the part of teachers and children has the potential to provide more meaning to who we are and to what we have experienced. When basic principles of learning are considered we, as adults, have to admit that we are very similar to children. We can come to understand ourselves better by our insight into the world of children.

My Own Tapestry

Reflecting on my own experiences gives me some insights into the warp and weft threads that have been woven together to create who I am as a person and as an educator. My own schooling has been very traditional but enjoyable--I loved school! However, along the way a few Mount Everests challenged me, particularly in math and science, but my insatiable quest to become a teacher spurred me onward to meet them head on and to conquer them. Some memories of schooling have faded but many remain very vivid. Is it not interesting how vivid those memories of the more challenging and perhaps even negative events, situations or teachers are in our minds? Memories of school, good or bad, do in some way influence us. Sometimes we need to probe deeply to discover the roots of the influence.

Finally, I set off to university to fulfill a childhood dream--to become a teacher. Early childhood education became my major focus of study. It is not within my conscious memory how I wanted to teach or that I needed to develop a philosophy of education. In an educational foundation course words of some of the great philosophers and educators fell upon my ears.

> Children should understand what they are asked to learn. Children learn from each other (Quintilean, 75 AD). Children learn through being actively involved in what they are doing (Comenius, 1592-1670). Play is children's form of learning (Rousseau, 1712-1778). Teacher's need to consider the whole child. It is the wise teacher who makes use of play and interests to give children purpose in gaining skills (Froebel 1782-1852). (Everett-Turner & Brinson, 1982, video tape)

These intriguing words stirred within me many questions because the underlying principles of these statements reflected an approach to teaching I had not experienced. How do children come to their learning? What kind of programming would accommodate children in these ways? Even further reading provided me with a rather abstract notion of what was being advocated by these great men. Then in 1968 I met my first mentor, Pearl Turner. She was a sensitive woman who had a deep understanding, commitment, and knowledge of young children and how they learn. When we met she had taught for 23 years and was a student, like myself, working on a bachelor of education degree in early childhood education. Before going back to university she had set up and operated one of the first kindergartens in Edmonton for at least ten years. Its popularity always exceeded the number of children it could accommodate. Parents registered their children a year or two in advance to insure a space in the program. While I never had the privilege of observing in her kindergarten, I always heard people speak highly of it and of Pearl as a teacher.

During my second year of university, Pearl took me under her wing and guided me into the real world of children through workshops and endless chats. Observing Pearl with a group of children was like watching the petals of a flower slowly open, revealing its inner beauty--it was magical! Pearl was a source of inspiration and a guiding light. She had helped me piece together a child-centered philosophy that began to emerge in me then and still continues to evolve and grow.

In May 1971, after completing university, I took over a grade one class from a teacher who was going on maternity leave. The children were accustomed to whole group instruction so I embarked on a math lesson about place value--groups of tens and ones. Early in the lesson I realized that some children had tuned me out because they already understood the concept, others had turned me off because they did not have a clue as to what I was talking about; while still others were with me making some sense of the concept being taught. This experience really breathed life into my basic beliefs: whole group instruction does not effectively meet the children's needs and interests, children need to be more actively involved in their learning, and children learn at different rates and in different ways--individualizing instruction is essential in the teaching process.

After teaching a few years I wanted to learn more about "open education" or an "open plan" approach to learning and the "integrated day". This desire motivated me to take a course in England in the mid 1970's. The course allowed me to gain a greater understanding of "open education" and the "integrated day". It also deepened my commitment to utilizing play in the classroom. As the children became more involved in play in the classroom I became aware of its complexities and some questions began to emerge. How can play be structured in the classroom? What is the adult's role in play? How can I meet curriculum requirements through play? These questions led me to take another course in England. There I met another remarkable woman, Kathleen Manning. She too became my mentor. Kathleen has taught at all levels--from young children to adults. At the time of our meeting in 1977, she was co-directing a Schools Council project on play for 5 - 8 year old children and conducting workshops on the project's findings. As she spoke, I realized the profound knowledge she possessed of children and play. During the week long workshop I absorbed as much as I could from this vivacious but unassuming woman--but I wanted more. Over the ensuing years, Kathleen's inspiration and guidance has led me to a much richer and deeper understanding of play and its value in the lives of children. Kathleen has touched many people's lives as she has become a significant player in their learning.

Like weaving, developing a philosophy involves continuous decision-making, selection, discarding, studying, persevering, and stepping back to look at yourself to gain perspective on your growth and development. In reflection I often ponder these words Pearl spoke so long ago, "When you think you have arrived, then you are in real trouble". The warp and weft threads that have evolved out of my experience have encouraged me to grow and change and I trust will continue to guide me in my learning.

As my life has been interwoven with people and experiences that have influenced me, so it is with children. Their lives in the classroom interconnect with others in the same way that the warp and weft threads of a weaving do. What influences do the children have on each other? What influence do the classroom experiences have upon them?

Over the years I have had the opportunity to meet a number of parents of former students. Many of them have commented on the richness that the program at Banyan Tree School offered their children. Hearing these comments deepened my curiousity about what the children took from the program at Banyan Tree School that nurtured their growth and development. Two questions have reoccurred in my mind like a reoccurring pattern in a weaving: "What was the school experience like for children?" and "What meaning did it have for them?" The weavers of this study (some former students, their parents, and myself), have attempted to find some answers to these questions.

CHAPTER THREE

A Way to Weave

Weaving is a challenging process involving making decisions about techniques, colors and textures of yarns, shape, line, and ideas that are to be used in creating a particular piece of cloth. Researchers are also challenged to make decisions about the methodology that is best suited to their studies.

My decision to pursue my queries about the meaning of children's school experiences followed a conversation I had with the mother of a former student who was, at the time, in high school. The mother said that her son often reflected on the years he had attended Banyan Tree School. He said, "There I learned how to learn and how to think." He went on to say that through his junior and senior high school years he compared himself to other students who had not had the same early school experiences. He noted there were differences. What were those early experiences that made the difference? To gain some knowledge regarding these differences two basic research questions for the former students were: "What were the early school experiences like for you?" and "What meaning did they have for you?" On the other hand, the two guiding questions for the parents were: "What were your perceptions of the early school experiences for your child?" and "What meaning evolved for him/her from these experiences?" In seeking answers to these questions the participants in the study were encouraged to express honestly those matters which were significant to them. There were times throughout the investigation when I introduced topics through posing open ended questions. However, the researcher has made every attempt to uncover the meanings that participants gave to a situation by encouraging them to recall, reflect upon and talk about their (students) school experiences and their (parents) perceptions of it. A good rapport between the participants and myself allowed open, free-flowing conversation which facilitated a dialectic questioning and answering of any matters pertinent to this study.

Designing a Weave for the Study

When delving into the experiential world of students, one immediately thinks about the school program, its many attributes and structure as well as how the student operates within the setting, and with whom. These are significant aspects of the student's school world. The student is affected by this world but at the same time affects it. In order to understand this world and to uncover its meaning for the student, a naturalistic (Guba, 1981) or qualitative paradigm has been utilized as it rests on the assumption that there are many realities. An inquiry employing the use of this paradigm diverges rather than converges as more and more of the student's experience is revealed. Geertz (1973) very aptly describes this divergency.

> Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. (p. 5)

Naturalistic research thus allows researchers to forge new understandings and to revise and develop new platforms for practical action in education.

The study focuses on the recollections of four former students (of Banyan Tree School) and their parents in an attempt to uncover the link that may exist between early school experiences and the meaning of them for the students. The selection of these students was based on the following criteria:

1. Each student attended Banyan Tree School for 4 or 5 years.

2. Banyan Tree School was located in a school district that had an open boundary system (that is, parents could send their children to any school in the city). Therefore, two of the students lived in the school's immediate catchment area and two lived outside of it.
3. Two of the students were male while two of them were female.

Each participant in this study was phoned, the nature of the research was briefly explained and his/her interest was determined. A follow-up letter was sent to the students and parents confirming their participation in my study and outlining the necessary ethical considerations. At the beginning of our first conversation I answered any further questions participants had and gave more details of the study. In order to protect the identity of the participants in this study, the students, their parents, and the school, pseudonym names have been used. The parents of the selected four students became a part of the study because of their potential to provide some important insights into their child's experiences in school.

It is the intention of this study to develop a composite tapestry of each of the student's early school experiences. Interwoven into the intricate tapestries is the uniqueness and similarities of each student's experience as well as the perceptions of his/her parents. Initially only a few threads of the pattern become visible. Over time, upon closer inspection, more threads are revealed. This allows one to have a greater understanding of how the individual threads are woven together to create a pattern of meaning in the overall tapestry of each student's early school experiences. It must be noted, however, that no generalizable conclusions can be expected from the tapestries woven in this study. However, patterns within each tapestry have revealed some direction for teachers, administrators, curriculum planners and teacher educators. Although the study may produce no definitive answers it may provoke some questions. Hopefully, it will give a fuller understanding of children in the learning process in their early schooling.

As people experience life they consciously, or most often unconsciously, give meaning to it. Werner (1977) explains how this occurs.

> One of the basic things we observe about man is that he constantly gives meaning to things: he is forced to define the ever-changing situations of which he is a part, to classify the things around him, to shape his perceptions, to interpret his experience, to anticipate the actions of others, and to interrelate the past and present. In other words, meaning is everything to man. Because it underlies all he does, he rarely recognizes the importance and pervasiveness of meaning for the human world. (p. 27)

To understand the significance of the meaning of a situation, one must openly communicate with the people who have lived within it. Conversations allow the meaning of a situation to emerge through the language. Carson (1986) explains the role of language as follows.

> It is necessary that the openness of the question be preserved and not cut off too early by rapidly formed opinions and conclusions. Openness may be preserved by giving due consideration to what was reflected in the language of the conversation. The words spoken may then have a way of surprizing [sic] both the researcher and the participant with unexpected insights. (p. 78)

From this one realizes the importance of the questions and answers that flow forth between the participants as they develop a deeper understanding of the topic under discussion. Gadamer (1975) describes this process.

> To conduct a conversation means to allow oneself to be conducted by the object to which the partners in conversation are directed. It requires that one does not try to out--argue the other person, but that one really considers the weight of the other's opinion. Hence it is an art of testing.

> But the art of testing is the art of questioning.... To question means to lay open, to place in the open. As against the solidity of opinions, questioning makes the object and all its possibilities fluid. (p. 330)

Conversational research also offers "the possibility of developing a community of cooperative investigation into significant educational questions" (Carson, 1986, p. 83)

In my study the questions exchanged between myself and my partners (the students and their parents) in conversation have been critical in the recollection of and the reflection on early school experiences. This exchange has enabled the students and their parents to become co-investigators in the study.

Each student and I conversed on two or three occasions each time probing until I was able to get a view of his/her early school experience and grasp its meaning. Different amounts of time elapsed between our conversations. The time spent between conversations allowed for the transcription and analysis of the tapes as well as for further reflections to uncover hidden or deeper meanings of the experiences.

The individuality of each student, his/her feelings and ideas, came through the conversations. As we conversed the impact of those early school years on him/her as a person and as a learner was revealed. A separate conversation with each student's parent(s) took place with the exception of one student whose mother passed away before I had an opportunity to converse with her. A final conversation involving the parent(s), myself and each student gave the participants opportunity to share each other's perceptions and to ask additional questions relating to the data to gain more clarity. Often times additional insights which deepened the texture of the tapestry, were revealed through this final conversation. Through the conversations, the student, his/her parent(s), and I were enabled to build, create, work, and rework their particular tapestry of the early school years. Other influences that may have interplayed in the early years: parents, family situations, individual personalities, differences in motivation and enthusiasm, and learning styles were acknowledged during the conversations.

All conversations took place at mutually convenient times and locations for those involved--most often in the student's or parent's home. The setting helped to create a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere. The conversations were tape recorded using a small, voice activated recorder.

Initially each participant in the study was asked to keep a journal that could be used to record further recollections, reflections, feelings and topics/questions that would become part of the later conversations. However, the participants did not use their journals saying they were unable to recall or reflect further on our conversations.

Through the course of our conversations, stories or anecdotes and slides helped to trigger recollections. As Kotre (1984) indicates, stories capture the meaning of people's experiences as they journey through life: "like most people, narrators play out their lives on a web of meaning, but the web they spin consists of stories" (p. 27).

Stories or anecdotes play a significant role in uncovering meaning in naturalistic research. Van Manen (1990) points out "anecdotal narratives (stories) are important for pedagogy in that they function as 'experiential case material' on which pedagogic reflection is possible" (p. 108).

The data for the study was collected over a two year period. A pilot study aimed at refining my questioning technique and conducting a conversation initiated the study. This involved one student and her parents. The information gained from this pilot study became part of the study.

Following each interview the tapes were transcribed verbatim, studied, and analyzed. Listening to each taped conversation a number of times before and during the analysis allowed the researcher to become familiar with its content and begin to see the themes emerge. According to Spradley (1979), an "analysis of any kind involves a way of thinking. It refers to the systematic examination of something to determine its parts, the relationships to the whole" (p. 92). Through this systematic reflection, themes emerged (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) related to the school experience. As certain aspects of the experiential world of each student and the perceptions of his/her parent(s) became known, an understanding of the pattern within the tapestry began to emerge. Hence, as the whole became more visible, the parts were seen in a different light.

A summary (highlights) of each conversation was made and shared with each participant. For each ensuing conversation, I made up and asked questions based on data previously collected. These questions helped to clarify, verify, and probe more deeply into the developing meaning of each participant's experiential world. Mutual questioning and sharing of this world assisted each weaver to uncover the meaning of his/her school experience.

The most significant themes, those which were unique to individuals and common to all the participants, have been written up in a "thick" descriptive manner and interpreted. The interpretations were made possible through further reading on related topics. In dealing with these two processes, description and interpretation, Weber (1985), states;

> Description strives to capture the flavor and "essence" of an experience, to recapture what the experience was like. Interpretation continues that process by seeking variations of the experience, searching for and making explicit its deepest meaning and its implications for human existence. (.p.72)

In this study, the themes become the weft threads of four tapestries which depict the meaning of the student's early school experiences.

Checking the Quality of the Weft Threads for Each Tapestry

Having taught the four students in the study and worked with their families, the researcher is very close to it. Realizing the importance of remaining objective in the collection and analysis of the data, I consciously have attempted to distance myself from the study's participants (both parents and students). In addition to this the researcher engaged an outside reader who has read through all the transcripts and summaries of the taped conversations of all the study's participants and has consequently checked on my analysis. Hence, the outside reader has brought objectivity to the study.

Being close to the study, however, has one major advantage: the researcher already had some knowledge about the students and their parents. Therefore, it did not take long to re-establish a rapport with the participants. In order to obtain a valid description of a person's world "it is incumbent upon the researcher to establish a rapport within the research setting that will not impede such openness and honesty" (Taylor, cited in Everett-Turner, 1982, p. 36). To assure the quality of the weft threads of the tapestries the researcher has drawn upon the four criteria outlined by Guba (1981) for assessing this aspect of naturalistic research: namely, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The table found in the Appendix A provides an overview of the steps that were taken to do this.

CHAPTER FOUR

Weaving of the Tapestries

Learning is an experience that is infinitely personal to each individual and must be experienced in depth for it to be rich and meaningful. Children weave their learning into simple or complex patterns which are meaningful to them. Realizing that many influences are intricately woven into these patterns, this study set out to examine those parts that relate to early school experiences.

Four students and their parents conversed with me. The individuality of each student and the impact of his/her early schooling came through our conversations, as did the parallels between the student and their parent(s) perspectives of the early school experiences. Four tapestries revealing the uniqueness and commonalities of the weavers in this study are woven in this chapter.

The warp, the philosophy of the school, remains constant as it is the foundation of the tapestry. Its threads keep running through the entire tapestry connecting the past with the present and the future. The weft, or the influence of the early school years, is woven into the warp. These threads are woven one row at a time creating patterns significant to each learner's early schooling. With the loom warped, a variety of yarns in a milieux of colors ready to become the weft threads, the first weaver is Denise.

Denise's Tapestry

Before Denise starts to weave, allow me to introduce her. She spent five years, kindergarten through to the end of her fourth year, in attendance at Banyan Tree School. She and her parents, Louise and Stephen, lived in the immediate catchment area of the school.

Although an unassuming child, Denise brought much enthusiasm and eagerness to her learning. Her enjoyment of school is evident in these words, "I always had a positive attitude about going to school. It was fun. It wasn't torture, like everyone says, 'Ooooh, school!' I would say I'll go to school!" (August 23, 1990). Her parents, Louise and Stephen, confirmed this. In her mother's words,

> I always found her really happy. She never, you know, never wanted not to go to school. She was always willing to go to school and, you know, share everything when she came home. She was really good at sharing things and saying what she'd done at school, and ... I was there too; I went to the school a lot which I really liked especially when she was the only child and, you know, you don't want her to leave.... I really enjoyed [it] when she went to school and I was able to go with her.... I'm sure she had a lot of really good experiences there and it wasn't like the ... sit at the desk type thing. It was the tables and the centers that she could be creative in and all that. Yet she learned well. It wasn't that it held her back or anything. She was always a really good student and it continued, all through her school[ing].... We've really had no problems with her. (September, 1990)

A personal quality that stands out for me was the degree of confidence Denise had as an individual and a learner. A vivid recollection of this confidence occurred one morning when Denise was in kindergarten. She came into the classroom before the bell rang, and asked me if she could share a book with the class. After assuring her that she could, she left the classroom only to reappear a few minutes later with this request, "May I read it to the children." My response was, "Well, of course you may", and she skipped off for a second time. The bell rang and the children assembled on the rug for our sharing time which often included a story. Denise sat on my stool holding her book up, facing the children ready to read while I sat on the rug. The other children, ranging in age from five to seven, sat spellbound as Denise read page after page. Near the end of the story, a second year student whispered in my ear, "Is Denise really reading that?"

Denise was also a conscientious student who really became involved in her learning. During her first year she was immersed in studying cats. She lived and breathed them and actually "became" one as she and her best friend crawled home on their hands and knees one day after school. When Denise's mother found the girls it had taken them 45 minutes to crawl a third of the way home from school.

Denise has moved onward in life and is now studying to become a respiratory therapist. She continues to be a confident, outgoing young woman who has a great deal of exuberance for life. Let us now go back in time to recollect and reflect on Denise's early schooling as seen through her eyes as well as those of her parents, Louise and Stephan. It is with sadness that Denise's father passed away before our last conversation together. As Denise prepares to weave she recalls some aspects of the warp threads.

> I remember having all the little stations all around (the classroom). We used to play house with the stove. We used to build things and I always used to be in the blocks with the boys. They wouldn't let me play ... but I got to play with them though.... We had the art (area) and we got to make whatever we wanted to. We sat right along where the alphabet was and we practiced our letters, writing and printing. I think we learned so much from having the opportunity to go into all the different things.... By having the hands-on experience with things you learn so much expecially at that age. (August 23, 1990)

Inherent in the "hands-on experience" is play. Denise goes on to say that play should be used as an approach to learning, even in school.

> It (play) can't stop. It's something that should go on. Some people don't believe that it should or that they have to be part of it, but there should be

> an aspect of play in order to learn in a different way. There's structured learning then there's sort of playtime learning. (August 23, 1990)

When asked what the difference was between these two kinds of learning she replied.

> I think with structured learning you have very distinct guidelines and with playtime learning you can learn on your own and you don't have to think consciously about learning. You're just learning and grasping some of the concepts, yet not fully knowing that you're doing it. (August 23, 1990)

She elaborates by providing examples of these two types of learning.

> Like going to a math class you have a specific structure, more like junior high or senior high, where you have this exam in 2 weeks. (Playtime learning would be more like a) physical education or drama class. There you are learning in a different way. You think it's a lot of fun but you are learning too. Even in an art class you are learning to design things and enjoying yourself while you're designing and not really feeling like you're learning something.(August 23, 1990)

The "playtime" learning experiences allowed the children to get involved in concrete ways which related to or extended their learning.

> When you think of the block area, you were able to build something that had been talked about. Like, you always talked about your houses, your pets, and just things that are related to what little kids learn so that they get an understanding of what things are. And if you have the blocks you can build a house or build a structure. (October 13, 1990)

Denise begins to weave in the first weft threads of her tapestry. She reflects generally on her early schooling.

> We had so much freedom and ability to expand ourselves and [to] learn when we wanted, how we wanted, and at the speed we wanted--I don't think I'd give that up for anything. I think it was a really good

> experience.... You have the confidence from being able to interact more with kids that way and you have more stability to decide, you can make spontaneous decisions. You are faced with decisions at that age. You are faced with responsibility at that age. You get these things later on too, but I think you sort of get a sample of what it's like and you learn how to handle it. Then when you're really faced with it, you can decide, or make the choices, so much easier and you can adjust quickly or at least quicker than some people can. I think what you get taught at an early age is with you forever. You never forget things like that. You always remember those things. And it's those things that matter later on. At the time it might not seem very significant, but later on they're one of the most significant things. (August 23, 1990)

Learning

Denise gently throws the shuttle through the shed, now weaving in the first pattern of her tapestry. This pattern relates to what she considers to be important aspects of learning.

Enhancement of and its complexities.

She first reflects on its enhancement and its complexities.

> In a setting where you actually learn and learn more than what's really required, I think you need a good structure: like a good backbone, that you have to follow, not really necessarily enforced, but still there. A teacher that is caring and is interested in the students pursuing their interests and attaining their goals. And just, yourself being there and

> wanting to learn and not just having to learn. Also, I think your parents' influences help in your learning process. If they're going to support you in what you choose to do, then you're going to achieve further than if they're sort of restricting you and saying, "No, you have to do it this way." I just think there are so many things that enhance learning and it's all combined with school, yourself, your teacher, home, and even the surroundings--like the children that are around you. Everything is going to enhance your learning or inhibit your learning, however, you see it yourself.... Well, if you just think of what learning is, you don't really get much out of it. But when you start actually thinking about it, it's just endless what learning starts or stops at a certain time. I don't think you ever stop learning. (November 3, 1990)

She continues on about the complexities of learning.

> It goes this way and branches that way and that branch goes this way and that way and those ones go that way. Then they integrate and then it's just one big mess, if you think about it. It's not like a tree, that's for sure. Because it doesn't just grow in branches that way. It interlinks branches and like [sometimes] everything goes into that one, but then certain things also branch into different areas. (November 3, 1990)

Within this first pattern Denise has also chosen to weave intricate designs relating to proper setting: learning at tables versus desks, having freedom of movement, and being able to freely converse with other children and teachers.

Proper setting in learning.

Denise reflects on her learning by weaving together her thoughts about the classroom setting.

> I like the fact that we didn't have to sit in desks. It was nice to be able to have free roam of the classroom and you could talk to whoever you wanted. You still had the discipline from the teacher but you still were able to go out and play in the sand or the blocks--do stuff. You could interact more with the students; you were able to communicate on a more open level. I don't know what it would be like if I was in a desk at that time but I liked it [the freedom]. (August 28, 1990)

At this point Denise stops weaving and recalls a conversation she had with some students who attended the school she went onto after she left Banyan Tree School. Sitting in a desk was a new experience for Denise.

Other students:	You didn't sit in a desk! What did you sit on?
Denise:	Tables and chairs
Other students:	You _didn't_ have a desk?
Denise:	No, we just had tables set up everywhere.

> They found it so hard to understand that you don't need desks to learn. When people think of [a] desk, they think of learning. With me, I didn't know what a desk was. I had a table and chair! (August 23, 1990)

Denise picked up the shuttle and continues to weave as she reflects that for many children the main theme of school is sitting in a desk.

> Well, if you talk to kids that are in an environment where they're sitting in a desk, all they do to relate to school is, "Well, I sit in a desk." You know

> you talk to a little kid that's in their second day [of school] and you go, "What is school?" They'll go, "Well, I sit in a desk." But if you're in an environment where you aren't in a desk and you go, "Well, we went and played with blocks and we got to draw and we got to read and we got to write and we got to this and that." And they go on. But if you're stuck in a desk--well, the desk is sort of the main thing that they think of school. It's not all the other things that they're supposed to be getting out of school.... If you asked a child "school?"--like if you had to say one word and [say] the immediate thing that came next. It would be like, "school--a desk." (November 3, 1990)

She further elaborates.

> They think that the desk is the ideal learning place. They don't get a chance to get up, move around, and figure out really what they are interested in. Being in an open area school you sat at a table and your interests were able to flow because you were able to flow within the classroom. Like if you were interested in reading a book you were able to go to a reading area and pursue that interest. If you wanted to go draw you would go to the art area and pursue your interests in drawing. Sitting in a desk your interests are related to that desk. So your interests were the math, the writing, and stuff and there weren't the extra things. Like you can pursue more things and be interested in more things if you can get up and do more things instead of being confined to a area.... So your freedom helps to promote interests. (October 13, 1990)

Denise finishes the weaving of a proper setting by offering these thoughts on the importance of movement in a person's learning.

> If you're able to move around then what you're learning is associated more with where you are instead of what you're doing because you're able to get

> up and walk around and be where you want to be.... I think that different settings give you, a different train of thought. (November 3, 1990)

Structure in learning.

Earlier in this pattern, Denise alluded to the necessity of having a good structure in her learning. She now elaborates on this structure.

> What you learn at the start of school; if you learn how to read and write you go on with that. Well, you learn to write better. You learn to read bigger words and bigger books.... These are the basics and you have to build from there and then things can branch out.... But, if you don't have the basic structure, the trunk of the tree, then you don't have any branches either. (August 23, 1990)

The shuttle flashes back and forth through the shed as Denise continues.

> In an open area environment the structure is there but you can change it in any way you want as long as you abide by that structure and you're still getting everything done. When you're in a confined area, where you're in a desk, the structure is more rigid, like you have to do this and that ... all in an order. You don't have the freedom to pick and choose what time you want to do it. I think if you have a basic structure but you don't have to exactly follow it step by step ... you take more responsibility upon yourself. You have to be a responsible person and have to be individual. Your individuality and your freedom of choice and your decision making evolves [and] gives you what you need later on to cope with a structured environment. (October 13, 1990)

Denise ponders what parents would see if their child experienced an open area.

> If they have a child [who goes] through an open learning area, they could see that there is a structure and it does help later on. I find that I'm not lacking in anyway and if anything I have a better understanding of how to budget things.... I don't think you'd see a difference in how much I've learned or how much I haven't learned (compared to someone who has experienced a more traditional schooling). (October 13, 1990)

The pattern continues to emerge as Denise is asked to define the structure of an open classroom.

> I think what the structure is ... a guideline of what you have to achieve. It (is like) a ladder that you have to climb. This rung before that one, you can jump back and forth as long as you get finished what you have to do within the structure, like you always have something that you're striving for or achieving. That would be what I consider to be the structure.... They [teachers] have set out for you [what] to achieve and then [they] leave it up to you to plan out how you're going to achieve that structure. You don't have to do it in a certain way just because this person is doing it that way, it doesn't mean you have to do it that way. You can just take it on yourself to get up there as long as you get done what has been assigned to you. (November 3, 1990)

Part of this structure in the classroom at Banyan Tree School was the daily log. Denise weaves in her perceptions of "the log".

> You, as a teacher, had a goal that you wanted all of us to achieve and by you planning out our days for us by just saying, "Well, you have to get this done on this day," then we were achieving what you wanted in the day so that we can complete that grade and go on to the next. So if you get through that day and make sure that you have it done then you're getting towards your goal. (November 3, 1990)

Denise then weaves into the pattern how the structure and routines in the classroom facilitated her learning.

> I just think you got an idea [about] what you wanted to do, at the times you wanted to do it and the routines just helped to enhance your day. I guess, because you sort of know what you want to do but then all of a sudden something else happens so it changes it a bit.... What you want to do is still in the back of your mind, things might change and you might be spontaneous and try something else, but just having an understanding that you know what you're planning on doing is ... helpful.... If you know what you're doing then your day seems to flow easier than if everything is very spontaneous.... But then, on the other hand, sometimes it's nice to just be spontaneous. (November 3, 1990)

She then reflects on the routines that she remembered.

> We usually had math to do and writing to do and we always were in the art area doing something ... and then what else you wanted to do.... If you had reading to do, but you could always read something else, and if you wanted to go play in the blocks or play house or play in the water, that was sort of an extra thing that you were able to do instead of just the main things that had to happen. You were able to go off and just do something different. (November 3, 1990)

Denise then weaves in the use of time within the structure she experienced in her learning.

> Because you have a list (the daily log) of what you have to do and in order to get those completed you have a plan in your mind anyway. And, of course, you want to do extra things because you don't want to do just what you have to. You want to go and do something else and you have to make sure you're still [going to] get done the things that you have to have done.

> But you don't want to do those all in order and then have all this free time. It's nicer because you do have a shorter time span when you're younger, not ten minutes mind you, but you just spend so long now and so long later and you have to do it that way and having just a little breather or whatever gives you that little bit of time. Something that you want to spend longer on, of course, you're going to leave it later to do. But you can just have little tiny holidays throughout the day. (November 3, 1990)

For Denise, this flexible use of time was a valuable aspect of learning.

> You have more time to do what you want knowing that you have a lot to do but you still have time to do it whenever. You were never out of time. If you really want to learn something you spend your time constructively learning in aspects of math and English, as well as your playtime with your blocks, playing house, or in the water, or whatever. How you spend your time is how it helps you. (August 23, 1990)

Denise reflects that the ability to use time well "starts way back when you first start school. If you just take time to decide that you have to do something and you get everything organized, then you can do whatever you want" (August 23, 1990). Using and organizing time when you have not previously been given that responsibility is quite a rude awakening for some.

> You sort of get whacked right across the face, like you [have] got to do it now because no one is going to tell you what to do. You have got to do it yourself and you feel lost.... Having the responsibility through early childhood education you can face those problems when you get into (similar) situations. You might not be thinking about it but it's still there, you never forget anything. You still have that confidence and responsibility within yourself to do it and get it done.... If you can budget your time you can still learn things, you don't have to be rushed. Half the

> time when you're rushed to learn something you don't learn anything at all. (August 23, 1990)

Although learning to use and organize time well is essential in those early years, Denise points out that it's not easy to do it when children are young. However, the teacher plays an important role in helping a child learn to budget time wisely.

> The teacher was there to help you learn to budget your time, "Okay, you have to do this too, you know" then you agree and do it. But it's sort of hard to budget when you're that young because you just want to do the fun things but you get everything done with your teacher's help--sort of, pushing you along--not really ordering you to do it, but just giving you subtle hints to get your work done. (October 13, 1990)

How Denise now budgets her time becomes an integral part of this first pattern in her tapestry. When taking a "Student's Success" seminar on time management in college, she found that she could not function within a rigid schedule of time blocks. She reflects, "I'd rather know that I have to do and do it when I want to" (October 13, 1990). As Denise weaves in the last few rows of this pattern she shares with her mother (Louise) and I.

> Everybody always says, "Well at 2:00 I'm going to study this for an hour." I go, "Well at 2:00 I think I might start with this but I don't know when I'll end." Everybody has time lines--I just have a time when I start. When I finish is whenever, then I move on from that. I can't do the structured. I can't do it that way. It's funny because they give you the calendars for school and it always has this time, that time, this time--I can't fill it in. I found that with that "Student Success" class they wanted you to do everything by times and block times. And I'm like, "What if you can't do that?" I said "I was never brought up ... (on such a) rigid schedule and I can't do it." They go, "Well, I guess it has worked so far." They don't

> have an answer to that. They can't tell me don't do it. They were basically saying you should do it this way but for me it's best that I just--

Louise finishes, "leave it open." Denise continues.

> Yup. They didn't understand how I could do that and still do really well in class. You just know that when you finish one thing you go on with the next.... A lot of my friends have to have a schedule. They're going to study this class for 2 hours--exactly 2 hours. They're going to have one break or they are going to study this for that long. While I'm like--I'm going to study. I don't know when I'll be finished but I'll just study. (July 20, 1992)

Viewing the pattern of learning that she has just woven, Denise reflects on how her early school experiences have contributed to her as a learner in the learning process.

> I think just having a stable ground and a very open past you are able to go with your learning and you're able to apply what you have learned further. Like, you have so much hands-on experience and so much mobility you are able to, sort of, give yourself an extra boost when you're furthering your learning a bit later on. I think, within yourself, you learn to grow so much more because you have ... learned that you can go farther than what people say and that you're not restricted. I find myself now, instead of just doing the minimum requirements I'd rather learn more about it and get it so that I can learn it better.... Having the opportunity, when I was younger, to have the freedom and the opportunities to go further in my learning, it has enhanced my learning. It has helped me to actually strive further to achieve my learning and go beyond what is expected of myself, and to challenge myself--I guess in a way to reach my goals and to reach what people expect of me in my learning. (November 3, 1990)

Role of the Teacher

Having alluded to the teacher briefly in the pattern just completed, Denise decides to create a separate pattern for the role of the teacher. The weft threads are chosen and connected to those of the first pattern. She commences weaving.

> The teacher was basically the structure behind going to school ... the authority figure, the mother figure.... When you saw a teacher you thought "learning.".... I think the basic role of a teacher is to enhance a child's learning. Like, be there for the child and know what they're going through, to interact with the child. Don't just stand and be an observer, like get in (involved) with the child.... They're there to enforce what has to be done, and I think that's a basic rule as a teacher, not to, make a child do something but just be there to make sure that they do get it done.... I like the teachers who are able to use different techniques in order to get the point across to a child. A good teacher is one who sees that the child is having difficulties so decides to change their ways (of teaching) in order to help that child learn. (October 13, 1990)

Denise went on to explain what it meant "to be there for the child."

> I just think they [teachers] need to not always be right there but just for the child to know that they are there and that if they needed help the teacher was there and that they were really caring about them and weren't leaving them stranded as soon as they gave them the project. It wasn't like, "Well, here's your project" and then the teacher gets up and leaves the room. You know that they are there too, and if you run into a block or whatever, you can go up and they're able to help you get over that block and get through that so you can go on in your learning process. And just

> to make sure if you want to ask them a question or need to get involved further in whatever you're doing, they are there. (October 13, 1990)

Denise reflects that the teachers she had in her early years used different techniques to assist children in their learning.

> You could go into the reading area and there were always the tapes and you just listened [to them] and then you could draw pictures to express what you were feeling. The blocks and house were hands-on experiences and then you were able to go into the writing area and you were able to write what you wanted to and have the teacher help you write. So I think that you [the teacher] touched on every aspect of learning so that some children would prefer the drawing over the writing, but they were at least able to experience all of them. And there wasn't any restrictions and you were able to get the most out of it that you can. (October 13, 1990).

The pattern begins to emerge and becomes much more intricate as Denise weaves in the importance of teachers' involvement in children's learning. The threads chosen for this part of the pattern reflect the complex nature of this involvement.

Setting up the environment.

As the rhythm of the shuttle increases Denise reflects on setting up an environment conducive to learning.

> I just think the way that they (activities) were set up there you didn't have to go through a gate to get to a certain area. It was open to you, like it was welcoming you to come in. You were always able to go into that environment with nobody saying, "No, you can't go in there. Like, this is for boys only or girls only." It was just like a big welcome mat rolled out

> in front of you that you just had to walk on and you were swooped in there and you were able to do that in any area.... The setting of the whole school was just such a welcoming environment--like you were always able to do whatever you wanted to do and you had so many choices. Like, it was really hard to make up your mind when you walked into that classroom. "What am I going to do first?" But you just had so many opportunities and so many freedoms to just float around and try everything once. (November 3, 1990)

Making decisions and assuming responsibility.

Within the context of the learning the teachers gave the children opportunity to become involved in the decision-making process. As Denise weaves in place a few more weft threads, she points out the long term implications of this involvement.

> With the freedom, you're deciding, [choosing from] so many areas. You had: the writing table, reading area, and the blocks. You had (the) house and the math, that you had to do. You had to decide. No one told you where you had to go and you make decisions because of what you like and that's the way it was throughout the school. You learn that you have to decide what you want to do. By having the freedom to decide, later on you are able to decide better. You make more stable choices because you have been faced with choices before. Where if someone just took you through and you did exactly what they told you to do, when you had a choice you'd look to someone else to decide for you because you're not used to deciding. Having the freedom and the space and the area to decide

> what to do, you have a better understanding of what a decision means. (August 23, 1990)

The shuttle's rhythm slows down as Denise finishes this part of the teacher's involvement pattern.

> You could decide to do something that you really wanted to do and do it for yourself, and feel more comfortable with what you're doing because it's your choice, not somebody else's choice for you. (October 13, 1990)

Making choices means that children are responsibile for their decisions.

Inherent in making decisions is the teacher's willingness to allow children to assume responsibility for their learning and to have some control of their learning.

> I find that if I have the freedom to choose when I want to learn and what I want to learn that I'm in control of what I'm doing instead of someone else telling what you want to do. It's like they're forcing you to do it and you can form a rebellious attitude towards someone forcing you to learn. Whereas, if you have the freedom ... to take responsibility yourself, this makes learning your choice not something someone wants you to do.... You don't take on as much responsibility when someone wants you or tells you to do it. You just do it because they're saying to do it.... I think it (the early school experience) gave you a lot of discipline that forced you to want to learn. You know what has to be done and you can still space your time the way that you want to. And you learn to do that throughout the rest of your schooling. It gives you more of a structure of how you know that you can learn and how you want to learn. (October 13, 1990)

She carefully weaves into the tapestry that learning is intrinsically motivated.

> Learning comes from yourself basically because you have to take on the responsibility. Your teacher is there to give you what you have to do but in order to learn you have to do it yourself. Learning can't come from

> somebody else, it has to come from yourself. They can push you to learn but it doesn't mean that you're going to be able to retain that knowledge. You can have someone keep telling you what to do but it doesn't mean that you're going to be able to know what it means a month down the road or a year down the road because you're not doing it for yourself, you're doing it for somebody else. (August 23, 1990)

Denise further elaborates.

> Learning can't be superficial. It has to be deeper than that or else you can't remember anything. So what's the point of even being there?... If you can take it on yourself and really be sincere in what you're learning you can go into a level lower than that so you retain what you're learning. (October 13, 1990)

Denise reflects that superficiality in the students' learning is promoted if teachers put restrictions on what they can learn and how they learn it.

> (It is) kind of like you can go this far but that door is locked and this one is locked and you can only go in this area and you can't go any further. If you're left open to your own imagination and your own ideas and how strongly you feel about a certain area, you can go to any limits if you are able to. But if there are the barriers there, you're not going to be able to learn as much as you want to.... If you have those restrictions, then you're not going to go any further than those restrictions because you don't have to. You've done an adequate amount according to them [teachers] even though you, if you're left on your own, might have gone further. But if you only have to do so much, why do any more? (November 3, 1990)

Denise weaves these last few weft threads in to complete the extremely intricate pattern of teachers' involvement in children's learning.

> I just think that the teacher is there to ensure that the child gets through the material. If you have an involved teacher I think that the learning experience is more enjoyable than if they're not involved at all. Because they can see that a child is not understanding and change their methods in order to help that child understand then they're really getting involved in the learning process. If they sort of stand over the children and watch how they're growing, then they're learning themselves [about] their teaching style or giving them a better understanding of how a child is actually learning. And, if there isn't that involvement, where the teacher is standing in the background not getting involved, then there's just not that the change that takes place in the teacher's teaching. They're going to be doing it exactly the same all the time and it's just not helping them at all to change. Like, when a child is changing if you're involved, you're changing as well. You can't stay the same when you're experiencing something. It's just not possible. But if you're out of that experience, then you're not learning anything, so you can't change to improve yourself. (November 3, 1990)

Development of an Individual

As Denise prepares to weave the next pattern, the development of an individual, she indicates that there are a number of components that become a part of it: namely, divergency in thought and action, being able to progress at your own rate of development, socialization in learning, and pursuing interests and being actively involved in one's learning. She reflects that the open structure gave more scope to the development of individuality.

> I think you became more of an individual. Because you have the freedom, you could do what you wanted, you became who you were, and there was no one telling you, you had to do this and do that and become a robot in how you had to do things. If you needed help, teachers were always there to help you with this problem or whatever. It helps you be an individual person and progressing as an individual instead of part of a group. (August 23, 1990)

Divergency in learning.

Denise feels that with this freedom individuals were offered more divergency in their learning which resulted in having confidence to do things in different ways. Denise comments.

> We have a major project to do this year [in respiratory]. I am trying to think of something besides doing what everybody else does. And I think that came back to [having] all these choices to make, but a lot people I don't think did, so they follow, continuously, the structure. Where, with me, I didn't have the structure at the beginning part of my schooling and it has carried on. I don't feel that I have to do what everybody else does. So what I do is always a little bit different than what a lot of other people do. (July 20, 1992)

She reflects on how people respond to this divergency of ideas.

> I think people go--"How did you get that idea? Like what made you think of doing that?" Well, I don't know, it just came to me. You get a lot of

> people saying, "Wow, that is a really neat idea! Why didn't I think of that?" because I did.

Denise maintains that experiencing openness in learning when [a person is] young is necessary for developing divergency in thought.

> I think if you start out structured you can't change. You know you don't really know what the freedom is. If you start out with a lot of freedom and openness, it's easier to go into a structured part because you still have the control with the structure but you still know that there is a lot more that you can get out of it.... There was always that structure underlying but it's how much they (teachers) let you do, with what it is. (July 20, 1992)

Denise's parents add to the weaving as they stress the importance of being yourself and expressing your own creativity." Louise says.

> You know, you've got to be yourself. I know, even Denise nowadays, knows where she wants to be.... A lot of people can't sway her--she knows what she wants to do and I'm sure when she was young she also knew what she wanted to do; and as long as everyone helped her do it she was fine. [You] couldn't make her do anything that she really didn't want to do. (September, 1990) I'm sure it (freedom) has taken her out of being shy. You know she's able to put things into perspective and be on her own or do things on her own so that she's not always in a structured ... you have to do this, you have to do that, where she can see beyond--beyond that and do her own. (July 14, 1992)

Louise continues to comment on how the early school experiences has influenced Denise.

> She didn't have those structured school years where she had to be in the structured school. You know, it gave her a little more independence than the kids that were always in the structured school. (September 1990)

Individual rates of development.

Part of this independence is being able to progress at your own rate. Denise notes that, "No one is going to be exactly the same" (November 3, 1990). She continues to describe what this meant for her.

> You weren't pressured into having to learn at a certain level. Everyone was at their own level, yet progressing and there was no one saying you should be at this level at this time. You were able to go on how you wanted--as fast as you wanted or as slow as you wanted but still learn in your way. (August 23, 1990)

Denise comments about the influence of freedom on development.

> When you have freedom you can learn when you want to learn. You don't have someone standing over you saying, "Okay, time to learn." You know that you have to learn, like you're in that atmosphere where it is a learning atmosphere but you still have enough time to go at the rate that you want.... I think freedoms are a big thing in education and learning.... You have to have some discipline within yourself in order to learn. (October 13, 1990)

Time is an important entity in the growth of an individual.

> We always had as much time as we wanted to get things done. If you needed a little extra help with something somebody was always there to help us or if you were done really fast and there was something you really enjoyed doing, ... you were able to go off and not disturb that person that needs that little extra help. Where if you're confined to having this much time to do it and you've done it, then what do you do? What if you needed a little extra time to do it? (July 7, 1990)

Socialization in learning.

Another part of the development of an individual relates to socialization in learning. There are several aspects of it that will be visible in the pattern. Before the shuttle is set in motion again, Denise and her mother, Louise take a few moments to reflect on the ambience of the school.

> You (the teacher) had this positive attitude and everybody in there had the same attitude. I think partially because we weren't confined anywhere. We weren't restricted in any way. It helped when you walked in and your teachers had a big smile on their faces and they know you by name.... I think it was such a warm feeling--everyone cared for everyone else. Nobody had something against someone else because of who they were or what they were or how smart they were. It was more of, "Let's help everybody get to where they should be." (August 23, 1990)

Louise shares her feelings as she reflects.

> I always found it a cheerful school. You could just go in and everybody was sort of bubbly and no one was really upset. You know there were a few times when people were upset but everyone seemed to be able to handle [things] whether it was the teachers or even the other kids in their little group. You know they were always handling it. And it was always a friendly atmosphere to go into. At least I never found I was ever made to feel that I shouldn't belong there even though I was just a parent. I was always welcomed into the school, welcomed into the classrooms. You know the kids would come up and say "Hi" to me all the time. You got to know them. They just figured I was another one of them! So you know it was really helpful, friendly and just a welcome school to go into. You

> walked into that front door and you never thought, "I don't belong here". (July 20, 1990)

Denise weaves in the weft threads of the first aspect of socialization in learning, attributes of others.

> When talking with others you learned from them what you can't see in yourself. Like there are certain things I don't like [about] what that person does and then you talk to that person and they're exactly like you. So it's like maybe I'm doing that, so you try to change yourself.... (When you) see someone you can't always make a correct first impression. When you talk to them, learn about them, and there are things you learn about yourself in the meantime. You can change some things because you like a certain quality in that person and you give yourself that quality. I don't know if you'd be able to do that if you don't have free contact with everybody. (August 23, 1990)

From this individual internalization of some attributes of others, Denise weaves in the second aspect of socialization in learning; namely, learning from your peers.

> You were able to join different groups. My friend and I were always together but sometimes I just wanted to do some things without her and we were able to intermingle with different people. You learned so much from your peers. They influenced you so much. I think it's just incredible how you can learn so much and I don't think you can do that when you're sitting in a desk. (October 13, 1990)

Denise observes that when two people with different ideas converge in an area "both of them are learning something from the other person which they probably wouldn't have done if they didn't have the freedom of movement" (November 3, 1990). Denise elaborates.

> I still talk to everyone that I went to school with them. It changes so much when you leave the open area, you leave the freedom and loose contact.... There are more restrictions on who you can talk to and it's the person that you sit right next to that becomes you best friend. And when you don't have the movement around to change groups, you find that when you get into junior high and high school that you get cliques.... I was not a part of a clique. I met so many people because I would just talk to everybody. (August 23, 1990)

Louise weaves in her view of the freedom that the student's had in their communication with each other and how this could help a child who was experiencing some difficulty.

> I don't think Denise was ever restricted.... You must have had times when they couldn't speak, when you were speaking, but a lot of times they were more open and could, you know, talk to their friends or in their little group.... If you have a problem and you talk to whoever is around you and you don't have to be afraid that the teacher is going to catch you talking to your neighbour type of thing. They were there. They were your neighbourhood. (September, 1990)

Both Denise and her mother recall how everyone shared their ideas with each other.

> Louise: Yes, it wasn't just their ideas. It was everyone's ideas. Didn't everyone in the class share their ideas and everything?
>
> Denise: We didn't mind sharing our ideas with everybody because everybody had to do it. Nobody's idea was bad or wrong or anything. It was just somebody's idea. None of us were made fun of because of something. It was very easy to talk to everybody in that type of environment. (July 20, 1992)

Another side of students learning from their peers is the encouragement they can offer each other.

> Of course, there's going to be some people that are going to be in the "I don't want to learn" mode. And there are other people who are really gung-ho on learning and maybe if you get those kids together then, the real gung-ho person can help the person who really doesn't want to learn get into the learning so they can go just a little bit further. (November 3, 1990)

A third aspect of socialization in learning is the differences between how boys and girls approach their learning. Denise reflects that these differences can be understood and accepted more readily if there is more contact between girls and boys in their learning.

> I think, if you get a boy and a girl into one area and to see exactly what the boy would do with what he's given, and what the girl will do with the exact same. Just the frame of mind that they do things completely differently. And if they're in that setting, just the two of them, both of them are learning from one another, so that the girl comes out with more [of] an understanding of the mechanical side of it where the boy would come out with more of an analytical side. (November 3, 1990)

Denise uses block and house play, two areas of play where sex-role sterotyping can be seen in young children's play, as examples of the differences.

> I think just with the blocks how the boys would build different things than a girl would build, and then when they're in that setting again, if it was a girl she would do what she had done before, but maybe add a few modifications from what the boy had done and the same way with the boy. And I think that in the house they would learn, well everyone knows what the role of the man is, or else they think it is but then you can say, well, the little girl might just not want to do something so then the little boy has to do that, so they have an understanding of that too.... So when you're in an environment where you're subject to the opposite sex constantly there's

> no way of avoiding that, so you accept it and learn from it and then go on. The girls are always going to be a girl's best friend at that age, but you sort of have a better understanding that the boy isn't so "icky" and he isn't so weird and opposite from you. There are a lot of similarities. (November 3, 1990)

The final and perhaps most significant aspect of socialization in learning relates to the multi-age grouping of children attending Banyan Tree School. Denise skillfully weaves in this aspect of her early school experiences.

> You learn when you're younger a lot from the older kids, but when you're older you learn a lot from the younger ones too. And it works both ways. You think, "Well, I'm older, I already went through that." But you still learn things because they're a couple of years younger. There are different things that come up in that time. (August 23, 1990)

The influence of being in a multi-age grouping throughout her early school years has greatly impacted her relationships with people today. Denise reflects.

> Like even now I can relate to people who are older or younger than me because I've always been with people who are of all age groups. I find I can relate to everyone and there's always something, no matter how old or young you are, you can talk about. (July 7, 1990)

Her parents concur with this as Denise's dad picks up the shuttle and weaves in his perspective.

> She's always got this group of friends and you know it doesn't matter whether they're younger or older than her, she's always got a group of friends. (September, 1990)

Stephen then passes the shuttle to his wife who continues to weave.

> Banyan Tree School was the closest (school to us), and when I learned it was an open area school I thought, "Well, this is kind of neat." I

> remember, you know, going to school with the structured classrooms and the big classrooms. Over at Banyan Tree School it was small classrooms and there weren't a lot of students, so it made a more intimate family and classroom type [of situation]. And she was also able to be with grades one and two, and even the kindergarten. When she was in kindergarten, she was able to relate with the older kids, and I think this is why now she can have younger friends as well as older friends. You know, that could've started from being over at Banyan Tree School when they were just in a little group. (September, 1990)

Because Denise was an only child, the multi-age grouping provided ample opportunity to interact with older and younger children. Louise reflects.

> I thought it (multi-age grouping) was really good because she didn't have that brother or sister to relate with. And you know she at least had kids that were older than her and kids that were younger than her. You know she seemed to have a lot of friends in all the different groups not just her own. Like she had a really good friend but she also had younger kids that were friends of hers and older ones as well.... I know some people will not talk to anybody who is younger. You know they have to be their age or a little bit older.... So I thought it was really good especially when she was not going to have another brother or sister. I really liked the open concept. I would do it again. (July 20, 1992)

Pursuing interests and active involvement.

Another part of the pattern that emerges related to the development of an individual is the children being able to pursue a variety of interests and to become actively involved in their learning. The manner and depth to which they explored these interests was left up to the individual learner, but interest became the nucleus of the learning. Denise comments as she weaves that if you really want to pursue something, interest provides the motivation to "open that door to find out more" (October 13, 1990). She recalls her insatiable interest in cats.

> All [my best friend] and I talked about was cats. [We wrote] all those stories about cats and every other picture [we drew] was a cat.... We were cats. We didn't even say anything, we just meowed. I don't remember even understanding what my friend was saying but we just kept going. It's sort of like we knew what one another was thinking without saying anything.... We went to the library and looked up books for cats. Then [my friend] got into horses, so she looked up horses. But I was still stuck on cats, then it was dogs. I don't think you'd be able to do something like that in a closed classroom.... If you're not really interested in what you're taking what's the use of taking it because you're not going to do good in it anyways. (August 23, 1990)

When given the opportunity, children get so immersed in their learning and carry it off in many directions. The shuttle is silenced as Denise and her mother reflect on the learning they experienced in the school.

> Louise: There never seemed to be an end to anything.
>
> Denise: There was always something more that you could do.
>
> Louise: Well yeah, that's right.
>
> Denise: We never stopped--a project never really ended. There was always something that went on from a project into what else you were doing. (July 20, 1992)

Being able to pursue topics of interest can lead to a more active involvement in learning. This seemed to be true for Denise as she finishes the pattern of the development of an individual. Becoming actively engaged in learning generally enriches or deepens the learning. This involvement should use all the senses. Denise reflects, "If you have five senses, why focus on just one" (November 3, 1990)? Having experienced being actively engaged in her learning during her formative years she is really affected by it now.

> When I go to learn something it's so much easier for me to take it apart and put it back together and then I know what I'm doing. Whereas a lot of people you know, they learn by writing. They learn just by listening whereas I learn mostly by doing. I find it really sticks when you get to take everything apart. (July 20, 1992)

With this pattern now finished, Denise recalls her reaction to seeing the slides I shared of her early school years.

> They remind me of how involved we got with everything. You knew that you did so much but you didn't know that you did that much! Now I know why I got so involved when I was older. I was always involved in school. I was in every club. I was in everything. Now I know why. (October 13, 1990)

Parental Involvement

The next pattern to be woven into Denise's tapestry is parental involvement. At Banyan Tree School parental involvement was not confined to involvement in the school, although this was an important aspect of it. However, it also meant support parents gave to their children at home regarding their schooling. Denise parents were very involved in the school in both these contexts. Louise, not being a working mother, was frequently involved with us at the school. Denise and Louise share a giggle together as they recall those early times.

> Louise: Yeah, I was always there, hey?
>
> Denise: Yeah, I couldn't get away from Mom. "Are you coming to school again Mom?"
>
> Louise: Oh no--(it was), "Aren't you coming to school today? We're doing this today. We need your help!" (July 20,1990)

There was a reciprocity of feelings between Denise and Louise about this involvement. Denise shares.

> Well, you just had such a feeling that your mother wanted to be there with you and sharing these things with you. Like, not that she's pushing you into this place to get rid of you. Like, that would be just an awful thought for a child, you know.... It was so nice to have her there just because it's like she still loves me and is interested in me and [is] trying to find out what I'm doing. It's like, you just felt so proud when you could finish something right there and [have] her be right there instead of having to wait until you got home, but to just go running up to her the minute it was done and say "look!" (November 3, 1990)

She went on the say that, "She [her mother] got different things out of what I was doing than I did, I think" (November 3, 1990). However, the sharing of the experiences and their different perspectives of them continued on at home. Louise felt good about coming into the school. She reflects.

> I felt really comfortable over there. I was upset when she got to grade 4 and I wasn't wanted so much anymore. But I enjoyed going over to the school and being involved with that part of her education. You know, not that I was hanging around her all the time, I was just there at the school. It was nice to be included.... Nowadays you listen to these parents who (indicate) they're so afraid of their kids going into kindergarten or grade one. They don't want to leave and they're too young for this. Well, I

> never had this feeling. I was always there. I never had that feeling of being sort of, my child is going away and I'm not. You know, that's the end. I'll never see my child again.... I could drop in at anytime over there and I did.... It wasn't like, "You have to come at 1 o'clock".... If I was out shopping or something I'd just pop in. It was really a nice feeling. (September, 1990)

Stephen, Denise's father, was also very involved in his daughter's education but "behind the scenes" as he worked during the day and was unable to come into the school. Stephen reflects, "She wanted to get a bee's nest to bring to school. I had to climb a tree, that big tree to get it" (September, 1990). When Denises wanted something, Stephen continues, "Dad would do it" (September, 1990)! Stephen became very involved in the construction of the creative playground at the school during Denise's last year there. His expertise was valued in many aspects of its construction. He recalls that it was "Lots of fun there. I didn't mind it (helping with the construction of the playground) at all.... I felt good about it." (September, 1990)

Both Louise and Stephen supported and encouraged Denise as she pursued interests at home and at school. Louise reflects.

> We never stopped her from doing anything. You know she was able to do anything that was within reason.... If she wanted to take something to school, there was no problem in taking it and sharing it with the kids, or if she wanted cookies baked or something, I would bake cookies and she would take them.... We tried to help her as well by being open and creative. What she would like to have done and that, we would help her to do it.... I guess I allowed Denise to do an awful lot when she was young.... Our minds were never closed. If she wanted to do something we would try to help her to experience whatever it was she wanted to....

> Well, both Stephen and I ... have had a lot of good experiences with Denise. (September, 1990)

Denise further comments on parents becoming involved in the school.

> They (parents) were always able to help out on the field trips. Parents came along and they were included in what we were doing. So they could see how their child was interacting with the other children and how they were learning that way. And I don't think there was anything said about a parent wanting to come in the classroom just to see how their child is doing or just stand in there and be an observer for a day. There were never any restrictions on that. I vaguely remember some parents just all of a sudden coming in and talking to you and then standing around for awhile and then leaving. But it didn't affect us in any way because we were just busy doing whatever we wanted to do. There was just somebody else in the room. (October 13, 1990)

Louise weaves in the last few weft threads to complete the parental involvement pattern She remembers how quickly she became involved when she walked into the classroom.

> All the kids used to come up to me and say, "Can you help me do this? Can you do this? Can you write this story for me? How do you spell this word?" And it was really a neat feeling over there. (September, 1990)

She continues.

> You would go in and they would say, "Oh, come and see this! Come and see what I'm doing", you know. They would take you wherever. If they'd just finished something they'd take you there. You didn't have to be that child's parent. You knew everyone. (July 20, 1992)

Transition from Banyan Tree School to Other Schools

The final pattern that Denise weaves into her tapestry relates to the question, "What was the transition like for you as you went from an open program to a more traditional one?"

> It was a change to have to sit and be confined, but you did know that there are freedoms out there because you had it once and with certain subjects like physical education, drama, and music you did have some freedom.... (With these subjects) you can still have the movement. You need that freedom. I think that if they would have taken all those away from me, I'd have just gone crazy. (August 23, 1990)

She further comments.

> You know what it's like to have the freedom and you have to take it upon yourself to give yourself some of that freedom back even though the structure is very rigid.... Well, they can't take away something that you've already experienced. They can't take it away so you sort of put it to a different use. (November 3, 1990)

Final Reflections

The threads of the tapestry are thoroughly knotted and it is removed from the loom and stretched out on the floor. Everyone quietly walks around the tapestry thoughtfully viewing it. Louise breaks the silence as she shares these reflections of Banyan Tree School.

> They (the children) were able to develop their own feelings. There was still the structured school but ... they weren't told you had to do spelling at

> this time of the day, or math at this time of the day.... (When something was) finished they would go and do something else. They weren't made to sit there while the rest of them finished it which I thought was a really good outlook.... Their minds were working all the time. Well, like "I really don't have to sit here all this time. If I get it done fast and get it correct, then I can go and do something else and go into the other areas. (September, 1990)

Stephen then adds, "They had all day to do it (complete the requirements on the daily log).... I guess we liked the teachers over there too which made a lot of difference" (September 1990). Louise concurs.

> Yeah, the teachers were really good. Everybody was willing to help. She never felt put down or anything.... She always had that sort of individual attention and if she needed something the teachers were always there and willing to help the students. You'd never feel that you were lost in the shuffle. It was just really great. (September 1990)

Finally, Denise shares her reflections of Banyan Tree School.

> That was just a cool school. I really liked it. It just enhanced the way you could learn, like you could do what you wanted to, when you wanted to and no one had restrictions on you. You had so much freedom. (October 3, 1990)

After a few moments she adds,

> The school almost wasn't a school. It was like another home. Your friends were all there and you know your mom could come or someone else's mom. It was like all these moms and dads were all around. It was like a big happy home! And we had a lot of fun. (July 20, 1992)

Barton's Tapestry

Our next weaver is Barton. He and his parents also lived in the immediate catchment area of Banyan Tree School. Barton spent five years in attendance at the school. When he attended Banyan Tree School we did not have the kindergarten age students integrated into the program. As this school had a continuous progress component to it, Barton's fifth year at the school allowed him some additional time to develop his skills. Barton was in my first class and thus was in attendance at the school during its early years of evolving from a traditional program to one that was much more open. Barton then is the oldest student in this study. Unfortunately, as I have already mentioned, Barton's mother passed away before I was able to converse with her about his early school years. His father was not living with the family for most of the time Barton was in attendance at Banyan Tree School, therefore, I did not involve him in the study.

Barton was a rather shy and somber child. He did not come to his learning easily and much of his childhood was clouded with other difficulties which are outside of this study. However, in spite of some difficulties in his interactions with other children he always came to the defense of the underdog, be it a person or an animal. A vivid recollection of this occurred one day out on the playground. A great deal of commotion centered around a group of children. Shrieks, especially from the girls, could be heard from afar as children darted in and out of the group. Barton quickly moved into the situation. The shrieks subsided and a calm settled over the group. Barton had rescued a garter snake that had been found somewhere on the playground and was being abused by some of the boys. He gently stroked it. Many of the girls whose shrieks had been heard earlier came closer to see this wee snake that had frightened them when it was being thrust at them. One little girl, who had been particularly frightened by the snake, came forth and actually touched it while Barton so calmly and sympathetically caressed it.

Areas within classroom which were most appealing to Barton were those that allowed him active involvement. These included play with blocks, sand, and water. Often he would be engaged in the art area. Through art he expressed himself very well. One winter morning we awoke to see everything outside clothed in the exquisite beauty of hoarfrost. In the art area some children, including Barton, were drawing pictures of the hoarfrost using white chalk on black construction paper. When Barton finished his picture he came up to share it with me and said, "Frost is snow that is curled up." Oh how he had captured the magical beauty of hoarfrost so simply, yet so eloquently.

Barton's interest in art continued as he got older. Barton spent several months in hospital during his last year in elementary school. He recalls, "The doctor there was pretty impressed with my art work. 'Well, if you go to school and go to university', he says, 'I'd be proud to have you by my side as a surgeon'" (July 20, 1992). Learning was too much of a challenge for Barton to ever consider a career in medicine.

Frustration in learning became more than Barton could handle so he dropped out of school when he was in junior high. "At the time I was 16 and in grade 8 and I said, 'To heck with this. It just wasn't worth it'" (July 20, 1992). He is now meeting with much more success out in the work force. For a number of years now he has been working in the laundry department at a government institution. He is happily married and has a delightful three year old daughter who truly is the "apple" of his eye.

Barton shares some of his memories of the physical set up of the classroom. It was a "wide open space and you didn't feel like you were in a shoebox" (January 2, 1992). The classroom,

> Was divided ... two separate classrooms but like one big classroom.... We had those hexagon tables. Instead of sitting in little desks we'd be at a table and had our soapbox [chuckling]. [Each child had half a soapbox covered with mactac to hold his/her personal belongings in lieu of a desk drawer]. (July 20, 1992)

When asked if anything, beside the frustration he had in learning, stood out for him in his first four to five years of school, he replied, "Not really. Nothing really special stands out. It's been a long time." (July 20, 1992)

Frustration in Learning

Barton begins to weave in the first weft threads of his tapestry. These threads form a pattern of frustration in his learning. He recalls what his early schooling was like for him.

> Well, it was kind of frustrating for me because I had a problem with reading and stuff. It was kind of frustrating.... And I'd be having trouble because I didn't know how the vowels and stuff went, silent letters, and stuff like that. (July 20, 1992)

Do you feel more comfortable with reading today?

> I never liked it. Well, I try to improve myself with reading but I'm still not the best one at it. Read a book on something, I can pick up on different words and stuff and try how to spell different words--it's a real pain. (July 20, 1992)

Sometimes Barton's difficulties in learning interfered with his interactions with other students. "People would bug you, you know that you didn't read and this and that, and spell as good as they could. I'd get in lots of fights" (July 20, 1992).

One way of coping with the tremendous frustration he experienced in his learning was to spend some time outside in a large sandbox that was located near the back door of the school. The teachers allowed him to go out when he found it necessary to do so. Barton continues to weave. "That was pretty helpful too, just to sit out there" (January 2, 1992). He then elaborates, "Like it got the frustration out of me. I'd go out there and horse around for a bit and then come back in and try to do my school work" (July 20, 1992).

Barton comments that other subjects came easier for him--"Like science and stuff was all right and math. I wasn't that bad in language arts. Field trips were all right too. [They were] more fun than sitting there and trying to beat my head against the wall" (July 20, 1992). Barton explains, as he weaves in the last weft threads in this pattern, how field trips helped him in his learning.

> I learn easier by seeing something like that. Someone telling me about it than I would reading a book on it. Because, I myself wouldn't be that interested in reading a book. If it was something that I was interested in, then it'd help me try to understand it--something that I'm not interested in, it's not so easy to learn. (July 20, 1992)

Pursuing Interests

Interest becomes the next pattern in Barton's tapestry. As he weaves he indicates that interest is an important part of the learning process. "Well, if you're not interested, you're not going to learn anything about it. That's the way I look at it" (July 20, 1992). The activities available to the children in the classroom were "always made to be interesting so that you wouldn't get bored.... If learning is fun, people want to learn" (January 2, 1992).

Realizing Barton's difficulties in reading, it was important to capitalize on his interests which sometimes varied from day to day. If he was interested in butterflies I would try to find appropriate reading materials or activities relative to that interest. Barton reflects, as he weaves in the last few threads that complete the pattern, "That did help because it was interesting and you tried to read about that particular insect or whatever" (July 20, 1992).

Transition to Another School

The third pattern Barton weaves into his tapestry relates to the transition to another school. Barton shares that when he got out of the hospital and began junior high, "I just went downhill from there" (July 20, 1992). He then comments on the kind of program that would have helped him in his learning.

> Umm--like training in different fields ... I'd like to learn about say woodwork.... You'd have to read something on it--this or that. And if you're really interested in doing it, then you have that drive. If you're not interested in something it goes in one ear and out the other. (July 20, 1992)

Mobility in Learning

The next pattern Barton decides to weave into his tapestry is mobility in one's learning. Being confined to a desk was something that did not appeal to Barton. Tables offered much more freedom. He reflects that having tables "was a lot better than sitting in a desk. Like sitting at a table you can stretch out or look around and stuff whereas in a desk you were pinned in the damn thing" (January 2, 1992). He continues.

> You wouldn't have to sit at your own table you could sit with your friends.... You could see what other kids were doing ... you didn't feel that you were stuck there all day. You could go anywhere--like even if you went to the other end of the classroom the teacher would see where

> you were.... You had more freedom. It was more like sitting at home doing homework than sitting in an uncomfortable desk where your back is sore. (July 20, 1992)

The last part of this pattern relates to becoming more involved with other children as a result of having greater freedom of movement. Barton quickly sends the shuttle on its way as he comments, "Well, more freedom to move around and you got to see other kids that are in a higher grade or whatever--your friends and stuff like that" (January 2, 1992).

Socialization in Learning

Socialization in learning is the last pattern to be created in Barton's tapestry. The previous pattern compliments this one. Barton recalls that assistance from other students seemed to vary. He weaves.

> Sometimes they would help you out and other times they'd say "Uh, uh. You're not copying my book" "Oh, I just want you to explain to me--like I didn't understand." They'd help you out but sometimes they wouldn't. All depends on the day they were having. (July 20, 1992)

As far as multi-age grouping was concerned, Barton thought,

> There is actually an advantage to it ... because you get to know the older kids ... the younger kids can see it [what is to be learned] a year in advance and grasp what the heck was going on. The older kids never really picked on the younger kids. They were too busy doing their own thing. (July 20, 1992)

Final Reflections

Barton's tapestry is finished. He ties off the threads and removes it from the loom and stretches it out on the floor. As Barton walks silently around his tapestry, viewing it from different angles, he comments "It was a long time ago" (July 20, 1992). After another extended silence he reflects further on those years spent at Banyan Tree School.

> [I'm] trying to think. Trying to figure out what the heck to say. [pauses] I'm just glad that I didn't have to go to another school because I would have been totally lost. I would probably have been in a special class.... If I was in another school, from like grade one on, I would have found it a lot more difficult. And the teachers would probably thought--"Ah, this kid has something wrong with him--not catching on". (July 20, 1992)

Tarren's Tapestry

Sitting at the loom preparing the weft threads for the next tapestry is Tarren. She spent five years, kindergarten through to the end of her fourth year, in attendance at Banyan Tree School. Unlike the previous two weavers, Tarren and her parents, Ethel and Ernest, lived outside the immediate school catchment area. She was part of the 60% of the school population who chose to attend the school. At the end of my second conversation with Tarren she informed me that she had chosen to go to Banyan Tree School. What had influenced Tarren's choice? This was first explored with her parents. Ethel recalls.

> She was taken along to a local school and down to Banyan Tree School.... She spent a day in each of the schools. She immediately did not get a group feeling of feeling stressed from people in charge (at Banyan Tree

> School). Of course a three month old can figure out a stressed person. So can a five or six year old and she felt good. She felt good about Banyan Tree School. Also, she figured she wanted to learn French.... From her little area in the world there was more challenge there, perhaps. I can only guess, at that time ... French could have influenced [her decision]. (February 16, 1992)

Ernest adds, "Nobody else from around the area we were living ... was going to Banyan Tree School. So, you know, none of her friends were down there so ... [it] was strictly her own decision" (February 16, 1992). Tarren confirmed that it was the French program that ultimately influenced her decision to attend Banyan Tree School, "I just thought it would be cool to learn how to speak French. That's what sticks out in my mind" (July 14, 1992).

Tarren was a vivacious, self-motivated, and confident child who got actively involved in all aspects of her school life. Her vivid imagination was reflected in so many things: art, written stories, discussions, and projects. In our conversations her reflections were often of books that I had read to the class, art projects she had created and people. About reading stories Tarren reflects.

> They were good stories. I mean they are things that I still remember--like The Hobbit. It was a good introduction to some good literature. I guess I didn't think about it then. It was a good way to get you interested in reading it and it was a good way to start the day. (February 9, 1992)

Tarren always became totally engrossed in the stories/novels shared with them. One very vivid recollection I have of this absorption was when reading the novel The Hand of Robin Squires to the six and seven-year olds. The children loved this story. As I recall it was very difficult to put the book down. They would say, "No! Read the next chapter!" On the rug the children sat listening intently to it. Tarren's body language told me how deeply she was experiencing the story as it unfolded. As the suspense heightened, she grew tense and leaned closer. Robin Squires, one of the main characters in the story, was in serious trouble. He was chained to a sailing ship and death was imminent. A friend, taking a great risk, came to rescue him. It quickly became evident that an axe would not break the iron chain encircling his wrist. Robin knew there was only one thing to do, "Between my life and my death was a hand. My hand. If my hand were cut off, the wrist lock would slip off and I would be free" (Clark, 1981, p. 132). At the point when Robin lost his hand, Tarren was up on her feet like a flash jumping up and down holding onto her hand as though she had personally experienced Robin Squires' decision.

Not only did Tarren get involved in stories but also in her learning. In the fall of 1977, the kindergarten, first and second year students embarked on a major project about the Queen's Silver Jubilee--25 years as monarch of the British Commonwealth. Children were traced around for the Queen, Prince Phillip, and five sentry guards. The facial features, clothing and skin color were made out of small squares of tissue or crepe paper. These squares were individually wrapped around the end of a pencil, dipped in glue and placed on the appropriate part of the figure. Literally thousands of these pieces of twisted paper became a part of each "person". The children worked on this jubilee project for nearly three months, October to mid December. It was started when Queen Elizabeth II made her official jubilee visit to Canada in October. So many different aspects of it evolved and Tarren was actively engaged in many of them. Vividly remembering this project, Tarren reflects, "I think we pretty much had the run of it, but the teacher was always there to help and you know answer the questions and such" (February 9, 1992). One aspect of the project was the creation of a HUGE castle mural that was eventually hung on the wall, in the main foyer of the school, behind the self-supporting figures, already mentioned, and two sentry boxes. Because of its immense size, the mural was also created in this main foyer. Many children collaborated on it for days. Finally, the drawing of it was completed. Tarren, along with several other children, rushed back into the classroom to tell me that it was finished! They led me out to see it. It was most impressive! Each child chatted on to me what he/she had contributed to it while I admired it and gave them feedback on their accomplishments. Then silence consumed us as we viewed it, each from our own perspective. Finally, I said, "You know there is one thing missing on the castle. Can you figure out what it is?" With questioning eyes they looked down at the castle then back at me. While many of them shrugged their shoulders one child ventured, "What's missing?" My response sent them back into the classroom to look at some books on castles. Meanwhile I got involved with something else in the classroom. Soon the little delegation, with Tarren in the lead, went back out to the mural. Within a very few moments Tarren was back in the classroom beckoning me to come out to the mural once more. Taking me by the hand, she led me to the right hand side of the mural and pointed to something she had drawn on top of the castle. There "flew" a Canadian flag. Tara and the others had found what was missing on the castle.

Following the completion of this project the children wrote letters to the Queen. These were put into a scrapbook along with some photos we had taken of the display and sent off to the Queen. Tarren vivdly remembers the letter we received from the Queen (see Appendix B).

Each day Tarren was either driven to school or she took the bus. Along with Tarren came a bag most often containing a delightful "soup to nuts" assortment of things. Tarren had a faithful commitment to that bag--whatever kind, shape or size it was, it was always with her. The picture of Tarren and her bag is engraved on her parents' memories too. Her mother, Ethel, fondly remembers, "We used to call her the little bag lady. She always had this bag she dragged back and forth and always managed to hang onto it" (February 16, 1990).

Whether or not Tarren still carries a bag with her wherever she goes is unknown to me. However, presently she is studying psychology at university and continues to enjoy life to it fullest.

Feelings About Banyan Tree School

Tarren now begins to weave in the first weft threads of her tapestry. As she recalls her early school years she reflects.

> It's more of just a feeling when I think about it [Banyan Tree School] than a specific memory. I can't even describe it. I know that when I went to (my next school) I thought I was one up on everybody. I really did. I just thought that I'd had this better education than you had. (January 25, 1992)

When asked if she could recall more specifically these feelings she adds.

> I know I really enjoyed myself. I think the two years I spent at [my next school] compared to Banyan Tree School is a different over-all feeling. I had a good time at [my next school] but that is more like I felt of junior high. It [Banyan Tree School] was a totally different atmosphere.... It was just more of a warm atmosphere, welcoming, involved. It's hard to pinpoint the differences that there are but it just seemed more academic after grade 4--different feelings. (July 14, 1992)

Seeing some slides of her early school years causes her to reflect further on her feelings of that experience, "It's very nostalgic! Umm--it's a good feeling looking at all these and remembering it" (February 9, 1992).

Tarren pauses to pass the shuttle to her father, Ernest, who continues to weave, "She always enjoyed it there, so much so that when we moved here--I don't know if it was one or two years, but, she still went to school there [Banyan Tree School]. She wouldn't go to [the local school]" (February 16, 1992). Then her mother, Ethel, adds.

> I wish my grandchildren could go to Banyan Tree School. I wish I could have gone to Banyan Tree School. I think the participation is the best--the only way to learn. To tell you the truth--you don't beat something in from

> only way to learn. To tell you the truth--you don't beat something in from above but you get your hands into it--yourself into it and the involvement just grows. But there was a difference in feeling. I was just listening to the two of you. There was a big difference in feeling--Banyan Tree School was more like home and ... you were accepted as you were. And most schools are a good deal competitive--not friendly competitive or positive competitive. [But there was an] atmosphere where maybe it was more important whether my hair was the way I wanted, it or dressed the way I wanted and not get involved--sitting there glued to your chair, maybe itching to wiggle or itching to do, but you've got to sit there in your chair, in your desk. I think Banyan Tree School was terrific. I really do.... Like Banyan Tree School was a nice place to walk into, [it] felt good. There were no bad vibes. There was no tension. (February 16, 1992)

Structure in Learning

Tarren is again at the loom ready to weave in the first pattern of her tapestry, structure in learning. She indicates that this will be an intricate pattern as learning is so complex.

> Looking back, I can't say what I thought it was then, but I don't think that I realized that I was learning to learn. I think if you're not conscious that I have to learn this, you will learn it more. Like being exposed to it and being able to relate to it is a much more efficient way to learn than saying, "I must learn this"--like trying to cram for a test. I have to know this tomorrow. You might do well on the test but the day after the test you

> don't know a thing.... I know the best way I learn--I think that the way Banyan did it was a very efficient way. Before you knew it, you learned something. (July 14, 1992)

She elaborates.

> One of the really good qualities that I got out of that was that you were quite in control of what you did. You had the choice to ... work at this or you could choose and work at this and do that later.... I was allowed to have more control over what I wanted to do. And I think that anything that you had more control over, you would pursue it better. (January 25, 1992)

When asked why it is important to have control of your learning, Tarren replies, "Because I think you have certain things that you're interested in more than others--the pathways you choose to take" (July 14, 1992).

Continuing to weave Tarren recalls the physical set-up of the classroom and how it promoted certain things that provided structure in her learning. "It was a very open area and within it came the independence in learning, responsibility and decision-making. Rather than having someone tell you what to do" (January 25, 1992).

She develops this further.

> The responsibility--there was always something that you knew you had to do, but you could still go play with the blocks or in the sand. But you knew that you would have to go and do this (something that was required). Independence--just being able to make the choices on your own--it's similar to what I was saying about responsibility. I think it made you, knowing that you made the decision and that you succeeded at it, feel more confident, have more trust in your decision. (January 25, 1992)

At this point Tarren stops and passes the shuttle to her mother who weaves.

> her life. I think it has been a good factor in her relationships with the person she is today. I'm quite pleased with her. This is a very difficult time--for people probably thirty years and less. There are a lot of kids having a tough time. Tarren is taking her sweet time, making up her mind what she is going to do, but we don't have any particular problem with that. It's a difficult decision. (February 16, 1992)

Ethel weaves in the last few weft threads of this pattern as she comments on learning for life.

> To prepare you to learn [is important] because you have a whole life time to learn. And you have to keep on learning in this life time. I was born in horse and wagon days and its '67, '77, '87--it's 25 years since people walked on the moon. What is the next 25 years going to be like? And learning should be fun. Learning is being alive! Yeah, learning is being alive. When you're not learning anymore ... [shrugs her shoulders and lifts her hands]. (July 14, 1992)

Socialization in Learning

The weft threads for the next pattern, socialization in learning, have been joined to those of the previous pattern. This too will be intricate as socialization in learning encompasses a number of different elements: namely, tables versus desk learning, reducing sex-role differences, acceptance and valuing others, and bonding between former classmates.

Tables versus desk learning.

The shuttle is once again in Tarren's skillful hands. She recalls having tables instead of desks in the classroom, "To this day I still like sitting at tables better than desks" (January 25, 1992).

She elaborates.

> It (a table) allows you to have more interaction with everybody. You also can go on the floor, of course, to draw but you're not confined to sitting at your desk. And I mean you can share your crayons or whatever with the person beside you. [Tables] allowed you to interact with people more.... [They] allowed you to do your work and still interact and get help from other people and give help. (February 9, 1992)

Tables definitely promote learning more because of the proximity of learners to each other.

> Rather than having to get up out of your desk and go over to someone else's desk you just have to lean over and their work is there, your work is there. It's easier to share your ideas. And the desk is--"This is my desk!" whereas "it is our table". (July 14, 1992)

Learning from each other is a result of this interaction.

> Just working with other people--not having to do it just on your own. You can get help from other people right there.... If you don't understand it right away there is someone there to do it--all the responsibility is not on you to get the right answer--several points of view, even if you didn't agree with someone's. (January 25, 1992)

Tarren weaves in these final weft threads of this portion of the overall pattern, socialization in learning. "Like they say, if you can teach someone something then you know it yourself. Being able to tell somebody something gives you more confidence also" (July 14, 1992).

Reducing sex-role differences.

The second aspect that Tarren chooses to weave into the socialization in learning pattern relates to reducing sex-role differences between boys and girls. She reflects that involvement in certain classroom activities helped to reduce these differences.

> We had equal opportunity to play with the blocks ... as we had to play in the housekeeping (area). We were encouraged to do both. I think that sets up your future quite a bit.... It was acceptable [for the girls] to play with the blocks and it was just as acceptable for the boys to play in the housekeeping [area]. (January 25, 1992)

Tarren ponders another aspect of her interaction with the boys at the school and weaves in these reflections.

> I don't know if this was because of the school, but it has changed the way I relate to males now. I read that females are afraid to compete with men in many aspects because they're afraid that they will loose their femininity or something, somehow. Whereas I don't ever remember thinking that. I remember playing football with the boys and all that. I think that has made a big difference. (January 25, 1992)

At this point Ethel decides to weave in an observation she had made. She recalls going on a field trip and observing the interactions between the girls and boys.

> I was impressed in something sort of new amongst little children. The girls did not sit together on the bus ... and giggle. [Instead it was the] girls and boys sharing together. They were just people to each other, which I

> really was impressed with and still am today. I think I've seen some effect of this yet today. It's very hard to describe, but a lessening of old fashioned roles, between the sexes and more of just being people is probably the big result. (February 16, 1992)

Acceptance and valuing each other.

Tarren now begins to weave in the third aspect that she chooses to highlight in the socialization in learning pattern--acceptance and valuing others. While in attendance at Banyan Tree School she remembers having an opportunity to interact with a classmate who was deaf.

> You know that's not something you would have ... [experienced] in a classroom when you're sitting down for five classes a day. [In Banyan Tree School], I think you could interact with a bunch of different people. That is really a building block for being able to accept [others] when you're older. (January 25, 1992)

Valuing of others results when you can interact with others. Tarren continues to weave.

> You learn to depend on other people and, therefore, that breaks down things like racism or gender differences. You know you see the person as an individual and not as a deaf boy. There was a lot of different social classes, I think too looking back. But you really didn't think about it when you were that age.... You know being able to mix and depend on them I think that that's really important--rather than sitting in the classroom and it's you who is in competition basically with everyone else in the classroom. When you're working with someone your success depends on

> them and I think that's really important as you grow up--being able to work with other people no matter what. (January 25, 1992)

For a moment Ethel steps in to continue the weaving as she adds, "There was a broad spectrum of kids there at [Banyan Tree School]. That maybe [is] what makes you [referring to Tarren] in part the way you are. You are very unprejudiced--very" (July 14, 1992).

Bonding between former classmates.

Once again Tarren is at the loom as she weaves in the next weft threads of the socialization in learning pattern--bonding between former classmates. She reflects, "There are still a lot of people that I went to school with that I know now. It's funny, there is always that bond there" (January 25, 1992). As she weaves she reflects that this common bond results from sharing experiences together during those early years.

> I think that is even more so being in an interactionist classroom ... because you got to know the people more personally. You met more people instead of sitting in a desk and there are the four people that sat around you.... You [as an older person] relate to people in a different way when you've known them since kindergarten. (February 9, 1992)

The weavers exchange places once more. Ethel weaves in the last weft threads of this pattern, socialization in learning, as she remarks on the value of multi-age grouping in the school. Multi-age grouping,

> Of course, contributed to the whole thing of relating to the world, you know.... Families like Tarren's--[her] sister was 10 or 11 years older than she was, her brother, 15 [years difference] approximately [made Tarren]

> basically an only child. She ... had four parents. So that [multi-age grouping] was nice for her. (February 16, 1992)

Role of the Teacher

The role of the teacher is the final pattern that Tarren has chosen to weave into her tapestry. Because the nature of a teacher's involvement in children's learning is both complex and subtle, the pattern is intricate. The facets of this involvement Tarren will highlight in the pattern are: encouragement of decision making, pursuit of interests, and active involvement in learning. Before creating this intricate pattern Tarren reflects on how she remembers her teachers' involvement, "The teachers weren't up in front of the classroom at a desk and everybody else was following them" (January 25, 1992). She further elaborates on the difference this made for her.

> If you had a problem it was much easier to sort the problem out rather than having 50 kids in the classroom and having to put up your hand. The teacher would just come over and help you with it.... I can't compare it to what they do in a grade 2 class in another type of classroom, but I'm assuming it would be just like what happened when I was in grade 5 and 6. Being able to work one on one with someone, I think you learn more and it's easier to relate to the person and therefore learn more.... I think the teacher being within the classroom you could relate to somebody more who was your equal. Like you knew they were teachers but they weren't someone to be afraid of. Because they were more of an equal you felt more free to ask them questions and intermixing with them was easier. They're not alienated up at the front of the room telling you what to do--

> like that's your basic college professor. I think you have to have the opposite of that to start out for your school. (February 9, 1992)

As Tarren finishes, Ethel takes her place at the loom and begins to weave.

> I have never been able to stay home with my children. At the time Tarren was attending Banyan Tree School, my work week was a minimum of 60 hours.... Therefore, school should be the right type of experience with caring people. Tarren figured out that there were people at Banyan Tree School who were real and caring. I was putting her in good hands in very simple language. She would not want to be another little number or name on a list. She was going to be people there, a person. I could see that too with my brief, first perusal of the place. (February 16, 1990)

Ethel further elaborates, speaking to Tarren as she weaves.

> You [and the other children] weren't treated like cute little dolls at Banyan Tree School. You were treated like people, individuals. [On a high pitched condescending voice she says], "Oh, you darling little thing, would you sit down now" and that sort of garbage. There wasn't that patronizing.... The children were treated like people, individuals. There was that difference.... This was sort of more real people interacting--little and big. That is kind of important.... The children had a natural, human relationship at Banyan Tree School. (July 14, 1992)

At the loom again, Tarren reflects that this natural relationship between the children and the teachers showed "the responsibility that we were given. We were allowed to have responsibility knowing that someone had enough confidence in you to give you the responsibility and independence" (July 14, 1992).

Making decisions.

Tarren describes the teachers' involvement in allowing children to make choices in their learning. She reflects that making choices and interest are closely intertwined. She weaves.

> I think about if you have choices about what you're going to learn--if you're interested in one thing then, I think you try harder at it which I still find today and you do better. But if you're forced to do something that you just don't want to do, you don't do well in it. Just having choices has to do with the control. You feel you have more control of what you choose. (July 14, 1992)

She further elaborates.

> If the guidelines are that you can choose to do this or that instead of being told ... "Tarren you do this and this is how I want it done."... Like you are involved in the creation of the product [project or other assignment] right from the conception until its finished, instead of having someone tell you exactly what to do.... It gave you a sense of accomplishment knowing that you chose to do it that way. (July 14, 1992)

Making choices comes "from within rather than being told exactly what to do" (July 14, 1992).

Weaving in a few more weft threads she reflects that having had the opportunity to make choices in her early school years has given her more confidence in decision making, "Through Banyan Tree School I was able to feel confident. I chose to go to Banyan Tree School and that worked out--so I became confident in the choices I made" (July 14, 1992).

Pursuing interests and active involvement in learning.

Being able to pursue interests was another important part of the teacher's involvement in the children's learning. Tarren reflects on why this is important.

> Because I think everybody has different interests and I think it's very circular. You'll be more interested in something you can excel at and probably be more interested in. That's how people grow to be more diverse. [It's] just a circular thing--more interest the better you do. (July 14, 1992)

Tarren puts the shuttle down momentarily and recalls once again how involved everyone got in projects like Mickey Mouse's 50th birthday and the Queen's Jubilee. After seeing some slides of Mickey Mouse's birthday project she exclaims, "It's pretty amazing to think that a whole bunch of little kids did that--like it looks pretty good" (February 9, 1992). Picking up the shuttle again she reflects that projects like these helped you to "start thinking about things outside of your personal little world" (January 25, 1992).

As Tarren weaves in the last weft threads of the pursuit of interests she comments that "the purpose of education should be to bring out the full potential of each individual" (July 14, 1990). She elaborates on how this is accomplished.

> I think the way Banyan Tree School did it was good. Let persons do, ... consciously or subconsciously, what they enjoy. I think you will excel at what you enjoy and you will enjoy what you are good at. That will make the full potential of an individual realized. (July 14, 1992)

Tarren reflects on how being actively involved in your learning is closely linked to the pursuit of interests.

> You want to be involved. That's a reason to learn.... You know you have questions about the world. You want to know about what you're doing.

> That brings questions and then you learn more. It kind of goes in a circle. (January 25, 1992)

To the emerging pattern she adds that being taught in a way that fosters active involvement is important in the early years.

> That way was a lot better way to start out. It sparks more interest than reading it out of a book. Well, you're going to be more interested in it when you're doing it rather than reading it. If you put pencil shavings in a sandbox you can pick them up with magnets. You're going to wonder why more. You're going to ask, "Why do they come up?" and try to find out for yourself.... I think it's important to have someone there if you can't find them (answers)--but thinking about it [helps] even if you can't find the answer.... Asking "why?", I think always helps--questioning it. (January 25, 1992)

Tarren continues to weave as she once again reflects on the Queen's Jubilee project, "You were so involved with [it], I think it was more personal to us then. It was a lot of fun to do" (February 9, 1992). She comments further on what ways it was personal, "You felt closer to it. You identified with it more--with the Jubilee and the Queen. You learned more about it" (February 9, 1992). As she weaves in a few more weft threads, Tarren continues her reflections.

> I think if you are involved in something you are more willing to work hard at it. To initiate your own ideas, you feel that you have more at stake--more to prove. When you're involved in it, it has more of your signature on it. (February 9, 1992)

Having finished her part of this pattern, active involvement in learning, Tarren steps aside so her mother, Ethel, can take over at the loom. Ethel recalls her early schooling and compares it to Tarren's.

> My early education was extremely traditional. I remember there wasn't enough for me when I was young. There wasn't enough challenge. I was a farm girl in a piddling little school and I loved books, but there wasn't the experience--experiencing things.... More experience, more coping ability. Like I see the early regimentation as being a deficit of some kind. (February 16, 1992)

She brings to mind some of the experiences Tarren had.

> Things like the cooking or things like the trips, things like doing things. It was obvious to me that it was not little girls doing things with little girls and doing little girls' things. This to me is very, very important. It was just kids getting together and doing things like the [Christmas tissue paper stained glass window] I put in the window of the store for years.... They went out and experienced things and interacted with each other. And maybe ... rather than sitting in your desk, in having something pelted into you--the fact that they interacted is a wonderful experience to start living with. The ability to communicate was enhanced there. And boy, we sure need that in our schools. (February 16, 1992)

Ethel referred to teaching style in a pervious pattern. She further reflects on it.

> If she [Tarren] did something ... she gained confidence and with confidence comes independence! If you've never risked, you've never succeeded and you don't get confident until you can have your success or for that matter, even failures.... The teaching style was [that] you participated. The teaching style was not to stand there writing stuff on the board with your back turned and throwing a piece of chalk at the kid who was out of order behind you and preaching at them and saying do this and this and saying, "Be quiet." Kids were orderly there. Kids were civilized in Banyan Tree School. Initially, I wondered, "Oh my god! How are 30

> kids going to be involved? How does she [teacher] stay sane? How would she stay sane?" It wasn't like that at all. It was pleasant but everybody was involved. I can't say what the teaching style was except somehow it got all these kids contented and involved and therefore they learned. (July 14, 1992)

The shuttle flashes back and forth through the shed as Ethel elaborates on the children's involvement. From observing them "they were truly involved in what they were doing. They really were participating in what they were doing" (February 16, 1992). Ernest takes the shuttle as he comments on the major reasons for this involvement.

> Smaller student ratio, more guidance, more attention to the children. You [the teacher] were not stuck in there with 35 kids in which case you have to line them up and have everybody do a syncopated two step. There was individuality. (February 16, 1992)

Once again the shuttle exchanges hands. Ethel weaves in a few more weft threads as she reflects.

> Education obviously wasn't ... slapped on you from above. It was something that you took to yourself. The learning was something that you were involved in ... and of course it sticks better.... Knowledge was absorbed at Banyan Tree School.... One learns better hands-on by experience [rather] than someone trying to beat it in. (July 14, 1992)

Tarren and her dad, Ernest, weave in the last few weft threads of the pattern, the role of the teacher.

> Ernest: You're saying here that you were involved in your learning. I didn't think you were aware of that at the time.
>
> Tarren: No.

Ernest: But you wanted the involvement. You wanted the praise. You don't feel that it was all that structured. Let's face it--you had a ball! And that is why you were happy there. You didn't feel the pressure of school.

Tarren: It wasn't like you go to school to be taught this. Instead of being taught something you were learning something. I think there is a big difference. (July 14, 1992)

Final Reflections

The shuttle falls silent as the last pattern is completed. Tarren's tapestry is finished. Everyone works to tie off the threads. Soon it is carefully taken off the loom and spread out on the floor. Each weaver, absorbed in his/her own thoughts, walks around the tapestry. Occasionally he/she kneel down to take a closer look at a pattern or feel the texture of another.

Finally, Ethel breaks the silence reflecting that, "Banyan Tree School, which she [Tarren] loved and wouldn't leave and [felt] very sad when it was over, was a totally good experience--one that will always be with her (February 14, 1966 and July 14, 1992). After a few more minutes of silence, Ernest clears his throat and reflects that Tarren's early years at Banyan Tree School were "a good beginning, an excellent foundation for learning" (July 14, 1992). After a brief silence Tarren's reflections are voiced. She picks up on her dad's comments and adds.

> Like Dad said, if you have a good beginning it is a lot easier to use a good beginning to get through the rough periods later, than it is to make up for a bad start--much more difficult.... I think I had the best fun with a good beginning. (July 14, 1992)

Michael's Tapestry

Michael, our next weaver, is tying on his chosen weft threads. Like our last weaver, Michael and his parents lived outside of the school's immediate catchment area. He first attended Banyan Tree School as a five year old in kindergarten. Then during his first year he attended a county school as he and his parents had moved out of the city onto a farm. It was his parents choice to bring him back to Banyan Tree School to complete his schooling up to the end of his fourth year.

Michael was a self-motivated learner who came easily to his learning. He was a very competent and conscientious student which is illustrated in this story. In 1978 Edmonton hosted the Commonwealth Games. This allowed a perfect opportunity to develop, with the children, an area of interest on the games. A wide variety of activities evolved and the children chose to pursue those of particular interest to them. Michael, who at that time was in his second year, decided to research one of the Commonwealth countries in the South Pacific--its name I do not recall. From the public library many books were borrowed on the various Commonwealth countries. Many of these were the large coffee table type of books. In my mind's eye I can still see Michael sitting at a table covered with these books. He was pouring over one of them intently reading about his chosen country. So absorbed was he the rest of the world did not seem to exist for him. After reading, he wrote a report in his own words about the country. It was very well done! On the day he completed it, the faculty consultant for a student teacher was visiting. He expressed astonishment at the level of writing Michael had achieved. After sharing the memory with Michael's mom she reflected.

> This is a kid who wasn't reading after grade one, you know. He had very low reading skills. He used phonics. Phonic reading in grade one and he was barely reading.... Reading because you are interested not because you have to. (April 2, 1992)

Michael also approached his learning with much perseverance and intensity. He was captivated by The Three Little Pigs' project which was described earlier in Chapter Two. He spent a considerable amount of time helping in the construction of the houses. One morning I vividly recall Michael wiring the sticks on the outside of the second little pig's house. He painstakingly wired stick after stick in place. What concentration enveloped his entire being as he constructed. After weeks of construction the children were justifiably proud of their creations.

Michael's deep blue eyes always had a twinkle in them and his smile always brought sunshine to the world. His smile would start as a wee grin then spread across his face to ear to ear proportions. This smile was critical in his role as the Emperor in a student performance in the school gym of "The Emperor's New Clothes". His mother fondly recalls her son's debut into drama. "My memory of that is just this image of this child coming down the hall in whatever he had on--red underwear or something [laughing] and beaming from ear to ear. That was the thrill of his life" (April 2, 1992)! Michael also has a vivid memory of "The Emperor's New Clothes".

> Yeah, I was the guy running around with just a pair of shorts on [laughing]. I remember that I was in grade three and a guy in grade four was going to be the Emperor and I don't know what I was going to do. But he got really scared or something like that and they asked if anyone else wanted to do it. And I didn't know I'd have to walk about in my underwear [laughing]. The only part that I really remember about that play was walking--we all walked around and I just remember walking ahead of everyone else with my underwear on. I had to have a smile on my face.... And I remember that everyone was killing themselves laughing. (April 4, 1992)

Michael's outgoing, laid back nature allowed him to take on any challenge that he undertook. In my mind I can still visualize him moving around the classroom from one activity to another with a great deal of ease and confidence.

Now Michael is studying commerce at university and continues to take on challenges in all aspects of his life. This year he won a scholarship to study Chinese (Mandarin) in China.

As mentioned earlier, Michael's parents, who are now no longer together, chose to send him to Banyan Tree School. When I asked Michael's mom, Susan, why Banyan Tree School had been chosen she replied,

> At that time I was looking for an alternative.... I am a questioner of the school system. I probably wasn't very happy with it as a young person and certainly even before the kids were ready to go to school. I really had a lot of questions about the structure of it [the school system] and the way it was organized.... So when I was told about Banyan Tree School my ears just perked up and went in that direction. (May 3, 1992)

She goes on to describe some of the attributes that she looked for in the school and Michael's experience when he attended grade one in another school.

> Caring about him as a person, you know, not as a mark on the report card. And being concerned about how he learned and how children learned and not the way it is in the book and the curriculum. [By curriculum] I mean, "Today we are on page thirty two. It doesn't matter if you're on page thirty two or not but today we are on page thirty two. If you're not ready for this, it's unfortunate. Tomorrow we are on page thirty three."... The little worksheets that used to come home from school were never relevant. They weren't concrete. They had no relationship to anything that a child would ever be interested in. Count the three balls. That kind of thing. I

> knew the whole time that he was in grade one it was wrong. (April 2, 1992)

Reflections on the Classroom and the Projects

Now Michael is ready to weave his tapestry. As he weaves in the first weft threads he reflects on the classroom and the projects in which he became involved.

> I always remember it being pretty open. I don't know if this is the right memory but books and things all around on shelves. So there was always something to do or grab.... There were always things being cut up [in the art area] or pictures being put on the wall--paintings, things like that.... Working or something different, you'd move to a different area.... I always remember that we were always working on something, some sort of project. I really remember that about Banyan Tree School more so than later on. It seemed like I always had something to do. Like even when I went home I was thinking about what I had done in school and think about something that I had worked on, something that I would do the next day. It wasn't like I'd go home and forget about it which probably happened a little bit later. When I changed schools, I think, it was more just go to school and go home and that's it. (April 4, 1992)

He comments on why the projects stand out as a memory for him.

> The reason it stands out was because it was a different way of learning, I think, than just sitting in a classroom and listening to a teacher carry on and just taking notes and stuff. Once I hit grade five that's all we did. Really. Now in university I've been doing my projects and stuff and going out and doing stuff on our own, but still mostly just sitting in the

> classroom and writing down notes and seeing how much you can cram into our brains as fast as you can. (April 4, 1992)

After viewing some slides, taken of his early years at Banyan Tree School, Michael indicated that they confirmed his memories. He weaves.

> Just seeing those projects brought back memories. I remember ... the Queen and the guard. I think I worked on the guard. The funny thing is that ... it makes me feel that my memories of Banyan Tree School were in fact true. We were working on projects. We were doing everything that we wanted to do. You know, that's just neat. I can remember doing projects ... but not a lot of specifics. That [seeing the slides] brought back a lot of memories.... I think that just reinforces my belief that we did do a lot of neat things. (April 25, 1992)

Michael steps away from the loom to allow his mom to weave in her recollections of the school. She picks up the shuttle and gently throws it through the shed.

> My sense of what it was like for him [Michael] is partly what it was like for me as well. I think those things are kind of connected. I came into the school not consistently like some parents did because I was working. But some of the times when I was in the school I probably learned more about education than ever in any of my education classes. One time I remember sitting in on a group time and all the children were on the rug. Watching the children in interaction with you--you were the teacher on the rug. The children were so involved in the discussion. Like it was definitely talking going that way not talking going this way [gesturing] and almost every single child, give or take one or two, were very involved in whatever it was you were talking about. I think it was dinosaurs ... so here, the mother at the side, partly educated and partly a mother becoming an educator, watching a group of children, but one specific child of course

> you focus on is your own, and thinking my god, you know here is a child who is having a chance to think. For me school was never like that. This child and all these children were given an opportunity to be involved in a discussion where they were thinking out loud. So that was one of my memories--noticing your child as a learner. (April 2, 1991)

An Approach to Learning

Soon Michael is again behind the loom and getting the weft threads ready for the first pattern in his tapestry, his approach to learning.

> I think to this day I don't know if it's directly from that [early school experience], or from my parents or maybe both but I still deal with things differently. I look at them different and I study different than basically all of my friends. They read a book, or they sit in a lecture--math is a good example. They would look at a formula and memorize it and remember how to do the problem and go through it and stuff like that. And I'll attack it differently ... I don't know why I do this, but I just do, because it is the only way I can study and the only way I can learn is if I understand it better. You know, instead of just looking at a formula and saying, "Well, O.K., this is a return on investment or this is the operating leverage or whatever, I'll always ask myself", why? Why is this the formula?"... Instead of just sitting at the desk I'll run around the house and talk to the wall and try to figure it out until I really get an understanding of why that formula works or why they made the formula. You know, it's not just math [that I do this]. It's [in] everything. Everyone else I know ... just

> memorizes the formula and go for the numbers and they don't really know why.

He then reflects on what may have contributed to the different approaches to learning.

> Well, maybe because they were never given the opportunity to think that way. Never shown that they could use their mind and create like I think I was [able to] in Banyan Tree School. They [the teachers] really let us learn at our own rate and think what we wanted to think.... Perhaps I haven't talked to them directly about it but I've had conversations with them before. They always find it strange [that] I have the ability to go through material very quickly, integrate it very quickly. I can study three chapters of statistics or accounting in a night where it takes everyone else two weeks. And my concentration level, when I do that is off the wall. You know, I can't have any distractions. It's total concentration. I'll look at my watch and two and a half hours have gone by. And they always ask me how can you do that? And I try to tell them that instead of studying by just memorizing the formulas and ... or even [with] English.... Don't just memorize the plot summary of a novel, and go in there and write an exam. Try to understand why a character did what she did and why did the other person react. And then if you can really understand the story behind that, you can remember it much better. You'll be able to bring more out instead of just memorizing the plot summary which is what a lot of people do. Well, I think you guys [the teacher] gave us a different approach.... Like [you] give us a little more freedom. Freedom to think. I always remember, my mom sang me this song when I was a kid. I always remember it and I thought, "Yeah, that's Banyan Tree School." Ah, what's that song? About that kid drawing a flower, so many colors in the rainbow.... That's what I always thought about Banyan Tree School. I

> was allowed to be that kid then and I'm not anymore--well a little bit. (April 4, 1992)

When asked if his last comment referred to him as a learner outside of the Banyan Tree School experience, he replied,

> Yeah. It's different now in university because in Commerce most of it is interacting with people or a lot of group projects. You get a lot of freedom to do what you want. But [not] from grade five to grade 12. (April 4, 1992)

Now in university he has become re-aquainted with freedom in his learning Michael reflects on this freedom.

> But I think that it just because it's my choice that I've been able to do what I want again. A lot of people will stay in the way they learned before. In university ... they don't treat it [learning] any different. They just memorize and read chapters. (April 4, 1992)

The shuttle becomes silent. Michael thinks back to his earlier comments about the flower song and ponders the question, "Why did you liken it to Banyan Tree School?" As he weaves, he elaborates.

> He's [the little boy] drawing a flower. And he draws it many different colors. How he wants to color it and how he wants to draw it is using his imagination. I think that reminded me of Banyan Tree School because if you wanted to draw that flower the way you wanted to, you guys [the teachers] didn't say that's the wrong way to draw that flower.... [Even] if the teachers thought it was silly or wacko, they still wouldn't discourage it. They [the children] were still allowed to draw it the way they wanted to.... There are two sides of a scale of course. I did have two teachers later on who did allow me to do the things I wanted to do, but in general they would make you follow a certain way. I mean, this is the way you write

> an essay. This is the way you draw a map. This is the way you build a car, you know, a wood[en] car in the shop. If you were to build it any other way, they would take marks off you. You know, you'd get a poorer mark. So you'd do it this way or you could fail.... In Banyan Tree School if we were going to draw a map, if we were going to build that car, ... you might have said, "Well, this car probably isn't very efficient because it has square wheels, but if you want square wheels, that's O.K." We could go and discover that by ourselves. (April 25, 1992)

Michael further comments on the importance of discovery in learning. The pattern continues to emerge.

> I think that [it is] probably related to self learning instead of someone just telling you. I mean if you go out on your own and you figure something out or if you learn something, I think it sticks with you much longer than if someone tells you. You know, square wheels won't work because it'll make the ride too bumpy or it'll slow you down too fast. I mean, if you make that car with square wheels go and try to flump it along and figure it out that it doesn't work. I think it allows you to grow. It makes you feel better about things if you accomplish things yourself. (April 25, 1992)

He continues to reflect.

> For a little kid to find out on his own instead of someone telling him how it is are the greatest educational experiences I can remember--the things I found out on my own. That's so much more important, I think. It sticks with you that much longer. (May 3, 1992)

Earlier in his tapestry Michael wove about the importance of learning at your own rate. He further elaborates on it this.

> Well, I think some people have the ability to learn faster and some have the ability to learn slower. [I] don't think it's a job of the educational

> system to decide how fast everyone learns and what they should learn. I mean, you have people out there who probably just can't fit into the system. Right? Now they probably could be really intelligent people that have the ability to do other things but our education system totally discourages people from doing anything else. I mean, if you can't do social studies and English you're bad. You've got bad marks.... You can't say everyone in the whole wide world is exactly the same and that's what they try to do, I think. So when they do say, "Well, you have to stay behind because you're learning slowly", that's a bad thing. If you fail a grade, ... that's like a slap on the hand and a shake of a finger--you're bad. I mean, in some cases that's true. A person has to be put behind a grade because they are not trying hard enough. There are a lot of people who get put back a grade because they didn't have the ability at that time to cover the stuff that they were doing. So what's wrong with that? They shouldn't frown upon that or make people look ridiculous because of that. You should be able to go through. There should be more flexibility, I think. (April 25, 1992)

The intricacies of the pattern, an approach to learning, are very evident as Michael steps away from the loom to allow Susan, his mother, to weave more into it. She weaves in her memories of being in the classroom and watching some children in the math area.

> And every single child [was] doing something different and noticing. One child noticing what the other child is doing and talking about it and learning. [They were] almost doing two activities or three activities at once--the one that they were doing and the one that they were watching. And [I was] just picking up on those kind of experiences that he was having--I was mostly paying attention to him. (April 2, 1992)

Susan elaborates on what was important for Michael in that scenario.

> I think he was trusted as an independent learner. Like from that one experience, at the math area, there was no teacher there. The children were learning on their own. And so I think that he really came to trust the fact that he could set a goal for his own learning and choose something, you know, and follow through on it and find some success and some kind of conclusions to it without being dependent on an adult for that. And as a mother perceiving her child, has continued to do that. I mean, as an adult he is making some of the most interesting choices I have seen young adults make in terms of his continued learning. (April 2, 1992)

She ponders whether the ability to do this was a direct result of his early school experiences or if it was just a part of his nature.

> I don't know. I remember you know, that he and his friends and his sister got involved on the farm because it was an open space and they could basically choose to do something and do it. But I don't remember if that was before he went to school or during or after. I really couldn't tell you.... I would expect that if it was part of him it would have been lost because the school, the traditional school system, would have got rid of that independence and learning quite quickly. And if it was part of him, what I think Banyan Tree School did for him was keep it there and keep the doors open for that and not take it away. (April 2, 1992)

Susan now reflects on the kind of things he experienced that allowed him to keep those qualities.

> One of the things that really impressed me, and he used to talk about is occasionally, was the whole idea of the log. The children would make choices of what they were going to do and what order they were going to do it in. And I think that was something that he really took to fairly early.

> I don't know if it was ECS or maybe when he came back in grade two, and that just became part of his approach to learning. I think that whole approach of logging your work and then you checking back with him before recess, checking back with him before lunch time, really just opened the door to developing those kind of habits. (April 2, 1992)

Susan recalls another memory of children involved in their learning and reflects on the trust that was an integral part of it.

> The other really strong memory I have is coming in the door of the school and the whole front entry way was full of children's art. It was everywhere. And in particular was the mural that they had done on the sea. There were about four children working on it in the front hall and everyone else was in the classroom. These children were working on the mural because that was what they really wanted to do and they were really involved in it. And there was no problem with them being out in the hallway by themselves. There's that whole feeling of trust. They (the teachers) trusted that the kids are O.K. when they're working.

Susan correlates this observation with one of the children engaged in the math area that was shared earlier. The weaving continues as she elaborates and weaves in the final weft threads of the pattern, an approach to learning.

> From the kids' point of view they just thought that was part of their life. There was no assumption that an adult had to be there in order to learn. Coming into the classroom there were lots of kids working on their own. And I had never, even though my mind thought that was possible, really experienced it. I had seen it in [another alternative program in another city] but I had never been there. I am an adult and I went over and joined the children at the table. They didn't look to me for guidance or answers. They were doing something on their own. They talked about it. It was

> just fascinating to me. So that--I think they must have really had that kind of self-understanding that, "I can go choose something and use it for learning or I can take something and I can pursue it over a number of days until I'm finished with it. (May 3, 1992)

Susan reflects on the importance of trust in this approach to learning. She said, "[The] teacher has trust in the students to do [something] and then the students in fact have trust in themselves to pursue it" (May 3, 1992).

Interest

Michael's choice for the second pattern of his tapestry is interest. As he makes the necessary preparations for this pattern he comments,

> I think junior high was pretty boring. I think at Banyan Tree School I actually didn't mind going to school.... I was okay with that but in junior high I did as much to get away from school as I could because it was just so boring. (April 25, 1992)

He comments further about these differences.

> I think it was just the way the teachers taught.... We had a lot of choices of what to do. Of course we had the math stuff. We had to learn our math and had our English class where we learned how to read, but I think there was a lot of time on the side besides those classes when we were allowed to do the things that we wanted to do.... If we were interested in something then we were really encouraged to follow it up, to read about it or do a project on it. I think that was pretty neat ... because I learnt. (April 25, 1992)

Michael elaborates on the narrowness he experienced in his learning in junior high.

> The teacher sat up at the front [of the room] in a desk and told me about social studies or ... English. Although he asked questions in the class and [we] gave answers and told him what we thought, we weren't really allowed to get off on our own imagination tangents. If we were really interested in, say, Japan, ... we weren't really allowed to go off there too much. I mean we had the projects--you know, the report ... but I mean that was pretty specific. It was a certain theme you had to write about, you know, ... the economy or geography. You really had to stick to that instead of just picking something that you were really interested in and going totally with that, finding [out] way more about what you wanted to instead of what they tell you, you should know. The other thing that I thought about too is that the classrooms we had were so blah. There was nothing in there. All I remember from grade five to grade nine, about the classroom, was there were desks, some books on the side, a blackboard, a teacher and that's it. There wasn't anything around the classroom that we had done. It was basically just books and teacher and people. Where at Banyan Tree School ... I remember ... everything you looked there was something to do, something on the wall or something on the bookshelf. (April 4, 1992)

Being able to pursue interest in his early school years influenced Michael in his later schooling. He reflects on his later school experiences as he continues to weave.

> I think that even though the teachers didn't really encourage us, they didn't discourage us. They didn't encourage us to ... pursue things that we were interested in but I think I did anyway even though that wasn't there.... At home we had a scientific library and a bunch of encyclopedias too.... I was real interested in science. So if I heard something [in school] that I was really interested in I'd go home and read about it more and ask people

> about it instead of, you know, leaving it at school and that's it. I wanted to learn more. Whereas, I don't know if anyone else did ... they were kind of floating. (April 25, 1992)

To illustrate what he has been sharing Michael puts down the shuttle and describes a science project he did in junior high.

> I remember a science project that I did too. And the teacher was amazed that I had even come up with it and [planned to] do it. Like nobody else would. They just kind of thought, "Oh, a science project." They did something pretty simple just to get by with it. What I did was the effects of alcohol on bean sprouts because we were getting to the stage in grade nine ... people were starting to drink. Whether they [teachers, parents] liked grade niners to drink or not, they did. So I wanted to find out--everyone said that it was really bad for you. The teacher was telling us that. But I didn't really have any proof so I figured, "Well, I would give it to plants." And I went in there everyday after school and watered the bean plants and had different concentrations from five percent all the way up to ninety percent. I let them grow first like they were this high [gesturing with his hands] and I kept adding the different concentrations of alcohol and actually it turned out some O.K. results. I think it got to a point where it was about thirty five percent and they all died. But before that they didn't. It was real fine border--I don't know why. Anyway, it was something like a project from school that I pursued where no one else did that. My science teacher was real impressed with that. (April 25, 1992)

Now Michael goes on to reflect on the importance of interest in learning but how too often this interest is stifled by teachers. Once again the shuttle is in motion as more weft threads are woven into this pattern.

> Interest, personal interest ... allowing the student to be interested ... maybe the teacher providing something, bringing up an issue ... and allowing him [the student] to pursue it on his own. I think that's a good motivator, but [too often] there's a wall. You can't go past here. We're going to talk about it to this point. We're not going to go more in depth even if you would like to--even if it's something you're extremely interested in, we're just going to go this far. You're [teachers] not going to let them go with it. (May 3, 1992)

Once again Michael elaborates on how he forged ahead to broaden the scope of his learning in spite of the narrowness of the curriculum he was offered in his progression through school.

> I think I always had the ability--like if I wanted to pursue something I would. And I never, ever saw any reason why I shouldn't. So I think I learned at a very young age that it's okay to be interested in something and it's good to pursue it. I was encouraged to pursue what I liked. There's nothing wrong with doing that and I also learned that I can achieve something. If I'm interested in something and motivated to do it, I go after it and I can achieve it. And there's nothing that can hold me from that ... you know even the education system. Even though I thought it was kind of brutal, that still wouldn't stop me. I still feel that way. You know when I think back, I think I learned that at a very young age. That's why I never had a thought that, "I can't do this." Like when I was quarterback for the football team I really wanted to get into drama at the same time because a friend was in it. She told me all about it and I saw the people on stage. And I thought, "Hey, that's something I really want to do!" Everybody told me on the football team, when I told them I was going to try, "You can't do that! You're not a actor!... You haven't been taught

> how to do that?" I said, "Piss on them." I went to the audition and I never once thought that I couldn't do that. I thought, you know, if I really want to work at it I can get this part. Nothing is going to hold me back and like I got it. You know I did--I was up on stage.... I had one teacher in junior high who was really strict in his curriculum and all this, but he said something to me that ... I always remembered and I always will. He always said, "Michael, never close any doors. Always keep them open. Keep them open for as long as you can. Keep as many open as you can and don't let anyone tell you that you can't do everything." I've always remembered that. But I think the other students didn't really listen to that, you know, they didn't know how. (May 3, 1992)

Susan is now at the loom and preparing to add more to this pattern of interest. She reflects on her son's pursuit of a wide variety of interests, but approaches it from a different perspective.

> He is very much a generalist in terms of the kind of subject areas or whatever. I don't think he's ever ... found one subject and pursued it. I think that's probably connected to his earlier experiences too. Because there really wasn't anything that was predominant in terms of you know, this is more important than that. The subjects weren't even labelled. Well, I guess they were, he had to do math and he had to do this, but there was no real emphasis on something over something else. They all flowed together. I think he has carried that forward. I mentioned to you [that he was] doing languages, and a bit of this and that, and now he's into drama. He can really move out from any part of himself and get connected with his learning. I think that has certainly come along with him. [He has] no bad memories of those things [his pursuits] either from his young experience, even though he might have hated the science teacher in grade

> seven, he already had a strong feeling for what science was.... I believe that's an outcome of being in one setting that was like that [Banyan Tree School] for a period of time. (April 2, 1992)

She weaves on as she elaborates on the multiple sides of Michael.

> Now here's a kid who has no drama training. I don't even know whether he has any even skill either [laughing]. But he came onto high school and decided, "Gee, I'm going to do some theatre", and went off to [a theatre group] and did several productions. Then went to college and did a couple there. But he trusted himself. I mean there was not even a question or any fear, any caution, anything. "Sure I can do that. No big deal. I can do that." And you know there was that whole freedom to play out. Being able to be comfortable with different parts of yourself. He is actually a whole person. He's got a music side to him, a drama side to him, you know science, math--you know all the subjects sides to him. And he feels quite comfortable being any of those things. And [has] the smarts too. You know he has an athletic side as well. Which probably developed more later, but it's just that comfort! There's no gender bias in his approach to those kind of things at all. (April 4, 1992)

Susan continues to reflect on what fostered this kind of development.

> I think it's because [of] the school and he was part of the school which made everything equally valuable. Art was a thing to celebrate. Music was a thing to celebrate. The drama kinds of things were part of what they did all the time, in their play, and also ... some of the other little extras, like that production [of "The Emperor's New Clothes"]. They were all really important.... All the children were doing different things. They were watching each other the whole time and sharing, interacting. I would say that [the school] has to be a contributing factor because I don't

> just see it in my son. I also see it in my daughter. She's the very same kind of person. She can really walk out any part of herself and feel very comfortable. She may, you know, not be choosing to pursue some of those things but the comfort is there. The comfort with the learning. You know I'm not even talking about high level of knowledge or skill or expertise or any of those things. It's that comfort to be there.... It's something that I think was really developed as part of their early learning. (April 4, 1992)

Susan pauses for a moment to recollect the many interests that were pursued at Banyan Tree School. She resumes weaving.

> Being able to actually take a topic and explore it and explore it ... certainly was something that kids in Banyan Tree School were able to do. It just wasn't anywhere else.... I remember being amazed by that. Being there and watching the children. (April 2, 1992)

One particular area of interest that stands out in Susan's mind is dinosaurs.

> That [interest] went on for months. And being able to come at an understanding from so many directions: the science side of it, the history side of it, the math side of it, and coming back and back and back at it. The topic was layered with understanding. Those kids knew more about dinosaurs than well anyone my age certainly. And I learned a lot from them. So I turned around and taught E.C.S. [an Early Childhood Services--kindergarten program] after that and dinosaurs was usually a topic of interest that came up. And I could actually converse with the children because I had learned so much at Banyan Tree School.

As Susan steps away from the loom Michael quickly moves in position ready to weave in the last few weft threads of this pattern.

> See, that's exactly what we need to do! Maybe we had talked about dinosaurs in the classroom sometime. Then everyone became really interested and they were allowed to pursue it. We were allowed to pursue it, you know. (May 3, 1992)

Role of the Teacher

Michael changes some of the weft threads and is ready to weave the next pattern, the role of the teacher, into his tapestry.

> Teachers are pretty important. You have to have a good educator. Kids at that age [in their formative years] are pretty impressionable. You can take them [teachers] both ways; so I've had good teachers and bad teachers, but I only remember the good ones. Well, I remember the bad ones too, if they were real bad. (April 25, 1992)

He reflects on the qualities he associates with a good educator.

> They have to be personable and have to be able to talk to you after class. I think the teachers I liked the best were the ones who had the ability to break down the role playing game. You know, where you are in the classroom [and] they are the teacher, you are the student. You were expected to behave in a certain manner and not talk to them on a personal level too much. The teachers I really liked, I [would] go to them after class and they would talk to me as a friend. You know, I could even talk to them about my problems. That brought me more interest in class.... You can tell, even when you're young, if the guys [male teachers] there and the girls [female teachers] were there just doing their jobs or if they really were interested and wanted to educate you. So I think a good

> teacher is one who isn't there just to do a nine to five and get a pay cheque. The one who really cares about the work, feels that what they are doing, educating young people, is important.... It's a pretty important job. So if the caring is there, ... then it will spread out to everything else, I think--the way they teach, and how they deal with people in the class. Maybe it's too hard, too difficult for some teachers. Maybe they don't want to get that involved or whatever, but I think that the better teacher is one who does. (April 25, 1992)

Continuing to weave he reflects specifically about the teachers in Banyan Tree School.

> I think the role of the teacher there was more of guidance instead of an information dump.... If we needed help on something, if we had questions, the teacher was there to answer them.... Like [the teacher] would be just walking around watching and if we had a question she would answer it, but other than that we were just there doing the projects. So I think guidance is a good word [to describe] that role. (May 3, 1992)

The shuttle exchanges hands once more as Susan prepares to weave more of this pattern. She weaves. "Every child (in the open area) had access to two adults, two teachers and all the people who were coming and going. [That's] just not what the typical kid gets" (May 3, 1992).

She reflects further about the role of the teacher.

> The word guidance or guide is a really valid descriptor. But for me that guidance had more than just input into the learning. It was also a guide in terms of this group of people getting together and kind of living positively together in the classroom. There were a lot of children there in the two rooms--I'm talking about the K-2 [classroom].... I didn't ever see any evidence of, what we would call discipline, after the fact.... I saw lots of positive guidance in terms of children being able to solve problems and

> work things out together. And lots of self-esteem stuff--like always positive responses to the kids in terms of what they were working on, how they were feeling, whatever. That to me was just as crucial as the learning aspect. (May 3, 1992)

Michael also wove this aspect of the role of the teacher into the first pattern when he was reflecting on the importance of allowing children to make discoveries in their learning. In this role Michael indicated that the teacher needed to be accepting, supportive and non-judgmental.

Learning Wholistically

Both Susan and Michael prepare the loom for the next pattern in his tapestry. Woven into this pattern is a wholistic view of learning, being allowed and encouraged to think, and dealing with irrelevance in later school experiences. Michael has chosen to create an intricate pattern with these because of their interconnectedness.

Susan is ready to weave in the first weft threads of this complex pattern. She recollects a vivid memory of a conversation she and Michael had when he was in grade 10.

> We had educational discussions and I don't know what prompted this [particular one] but it was something that had gone on in the school.... He was just commenting on how none of the kids in his class could think. "What do you mean by that--they can't think?" [I asked]. "Well, the teacher will ask a question. Nobody will even try to come up with an answer," [replied Michael]. And so I asked him if he did and he said, "Well, I do, but I can't always be the person talking in class."

> Well, then we started talking about why is that? "Why, in a population of 30 young people, are 29 of them not thinking?" And that was his wording. He was talking about their thinking. I didn't give that to him. And he stopped. He hadn't really talked about his Banyan Tree School experience very much before, even though I had probably questioned him along the way. He stopped and said, "It's because I went to Banyan Tree School." And I said, "What?" He said, "Because we used to be allowed to think in Banyan Tree School." And so I said to him, "But Michael, you've been in a regular school system for five years! Right? I mean, why should Banyan Tree School have anything to do with it?" He said, "I think it has to be when you're young, mom. You have to have that when you're young" (April 2, 1992)

Into the first pattern, an approach to learning, Michael had reflected on the differences he observed in how he approached learning compared with other students. He began noticing these differences when he was in high school around the time he had the preceding conversation with his mother. At the loom once more, Michael reflects on the time he started to take a more wholistic view of learning.

> I didn't really think about it in junior high, but in high school I started thinking more wholistically about everything. I started looking at other people and trying to think how they thought and all that sort of stuff. Then I looked at other students, and like I say, everyone in high school couldn't understand how I played football, went skiing every weekend, took piano lessons, was involved in [two drama groups], and all this other stuff. I was on probation in every single class in high school because I didn't go to a lot of classes, because I thought they were useless, and I still came out with an 85-90 average. They were pretty amazed by that.... That's when I started thinking about it? "Well, how can I do that?" And

> then I looked internally and thought about how I learnt, you know, just more effectively.... I looked at them and the way they studied. The way they tried to learn in class too was just really shallow. They weren't there to really learn, they were just there because they were supposed to be. They didn't even have the interest in it, just trying to get through. And that's when I started realizing it. Still holds today. Like I told you last time, people going to university and a lot of them are exactly the same way. They still do it the same way, you know, they just read something, memorize the formula. They aren't getting any depth into it or trying to really understand it. (April 25, 1992)

Michael weaves more weft threads into the pattern as he reflects on how his early school fostered the way he approaches learning.

> I don't know if I can comment on young children because I'm studying management now ... but I think your first years in school are probably your most impressionable. They have to be. That's where you are getting an idea of what it's like out there.... If you get a really bad impression the first few years and you really don't like being there [in school] ... how are you going to change from that?... So if they [children] have a really bad experience the first few years, and they are not allowed to grow and really shoot off in the things that they like and do their projects, ... if they are already constricted into what they are going to learn, then how are they going to appreciate the rest of their education? How are they going to ... expand from that? You know, the first few years ... should be ones that are really, really open. You can learn a lot from grade one to grade four.... [During these years, children] should be encouraged in how to think and how to learn instead of just pointing a finger and saying, "This is what we learn." (April 25, 1992)

Michael reflects on the kinds of experiences he had in those early years that promoted thinking and learning how to learn.

> I think that it's just the way we were allowed to think. We weren't restricted. Our imagination was allowed to go where it wanted to. I mean, if you restrict the kid's way of thinking and his imagination when he is that young, where is he or she going to be ... when you cut it off right when everything is so new and you are just getting into the world? If you start cutting them off then, what's going to happen to that person later on?... I was allowed to think my own way, do my own thing. My mind was allowed to wander, to go where it wanted to. I carried it on with me because I [had] already developed that and I thought, "I learned that it was okay to think different things and be interested in different things." Later on ... even though the system ... was more restrictive I still continued ... learning that way or trying to learn that way. (April 25, 1992)

Michael weaves in a few more weft threads as he further reflects.

> I think I carried it [ability to think] with me. I was conscious of the method of teaching [at Banyan Tree School] was different. I thought about it and then I came to realize that the other students weren't allowing themselves to think. They were just computers, sitting there ready to get information off the board and they didn't even want to be there but I tried to stay out of that. (May 3, 1992)

Susan talks to Michael about his later school experiences. She shares her perceptions.

> I saw a number of things that weren't within the school system. Like I don't think I ever saw you within the school system actually take a topic and really pursue it--you know in grade 10 or grade 11. I saw you do that out of the system--like you did that with music. You were one of the most

> motivated people I've ever seen in terms of finishing your music, getting into the drama thing, and when you decided to pursue a sport you, you just decided went after it, even though you didn't have the background the other kids had. You started playing football late and went after it. So you had the ability to be quite goal-directed. So I guess my wonderings are whether the school system didn't take over a little bit. That within that setting [I think you] kind of become deadened but out there [you know you] can still do it. I don't know. (May 3, 1992)

Susan steps aside to allow Michael to weave in his reflections on these comments.

> Maybe it did, maybe it did. Actually I think you're probably right. In high school ... I said to myself, "Piss on it, this is not working! I'm not learning a thing here. I can learn six times as much on my own." So that's what I did. I never went to school.... In high school I did turn a bit into, I don't know, not a rebel, but I didn't want to be there, so I wasn't. I spent a lot of time doing other things--like the music, the theatre productions. I spent a lot of time on football. If I skipped a class I wouldn't go out the back door and have a cigarette. I'd be out there throwing a football. I was quarterback, I had to throw the ball. I was trying to improve my arm or I'd be doing something else--working on a dance for one of the plays or reading through my Shakespeare notes.... Going to class was useless. (April 1992)

Encouragement to learn, to think in these ways was not only encouraged in his early years at school but was also encouraged at home too. Michael responds to this observation as he weaves in the last weft threads of the pattern, learning wholistically. "It's probably from both levels. It has to be.... The school part is really important and the parenting thing kind of goes without saying" (April 25, 1992).

Transition from Banyan Tree School to Other Schools

The final pattern in Michael's tapestry relates to his transition from Banyan Tree School to the next school. Michael reflects on this transition.

> I do remember when I went to grade five and six I missed ... my teachers asking me questions, working on the projects, and doing different things. When I went to grade five I didn't really expect the transition and moved right into the desk and the teacher screaming at you--talking away. I remember that transition. I didn't like it. (April 4, 1992)

Reflecting on the transition from Banyan Tree School, Susan shares,

> I often wondered what it would be like for them going into the regular school. Those kids did wonderfully well in the school system.... They seemed to adapt to the competition without even worrying about it. I didn't know whether they would be able to write tests. So it was kind of interesting to watch that transition. I always attributed it [the easy transition] to ... the fact that they had really good self-concepts coming out of the school. They had ... really good, strong knowledge bases too, stronger than the kids that were in the regular system, but it was the fact that they really had positive self-concepts. (April 2, 1992)

She comments on how they were developed in the school.

> They were mostly developed through your interactions with the children. You always listened to them. I learned how to listen from watching you. You listened with your eyes, you listened with your body, you listened through your words. You accepted them. You knew every single child in that room and all their individual natures and could respond to them. You accepted those children for exactly who they were and appreciated them. I think there were some things that were going on in the educational

> process--the fact that they weren't marked and they didn't have tests, you know all those kinds of things. They didn't have to worry about comparisons with each other. (April 2, 1992)

Final Reflections

Finally, the tapestry is finished and all the threads are tied. The tapestry is removed from the loom and spread out on the floor. Some reflective moments follow. Kneeling down to take a closer look at the patterns and to feel their textures, Susan reflects on what it means to educate.

> You open the doors for the child to find out their own capabilities and competencies and a whole range of things. Not just in a narrow cognitive, academic focus. And to be there to support that person pursuing something that they are finding that is important to them. I think that is an important part of it as well. I think the "have to" skills can fall into place along the way. Children will learn math when they are pursuing topics of interest--they will! They will read, they will read. (May 3, 1992)

Having walked all around the tapestry viewing it from all angles, Michael sits down beside it. A smile spreads across his face as he reflects.

> I think that every kid should have the opportunity to go through that. You know, they might not keep going on in the system and they might not take it with them but they should still be given the opportunity. I think that, like I said before, the rest of the system going up should be a little more like that--a little more free. I mean we are only human beings so you can't expect us to act like robots programmed like machines. You have to

> allow human beings freedom ... so that they can grow to their full potential otherwise you're limiting [them]. (April 25, 1992)

He reflects further on this.

> Freedom to think and freedom to grow ... in your own mind. It's not just the accumulation of knowledge which is what I think a lot of it [education] does. I mean education should be about learning how to be a human being too--learning how to think and learning how to use your imagination. And that's really the only way we can develop. (April 25, 1992)

Dominant Patterns in the Tapestries

We know that the weavers in this study have something in common--they all, at some time, were a part of Banyan Tree School. However, by viewing the tapestries we can see how, and to what depth, their individual experiences are unique. Therefore, each tapestry deserves very close examination to gain the essence of the early school experience for each of the weavers. The tapestries vary in texture, color and complexity, however, five dominant patterns are evident in them. These patterns although not identical, constitute the major findings of this study. A wholistic view of learning incorporating the nature of children and how they learn is an intricate and dominant pattern in each of the tapestries. The role of the teacher in children's learning is another pattern that stands out in every tapestry. One role that has a particularly dominate pattern in each of the tapestries is that of teachers allowing children to pursue interests in their learning. Related to this role is allowing children to have some ownership of their learning through giving then opportunities to make choices, assume responsibility, and gain independence. A third pattern very evident in each weaver's tapestry is the socialization they experienced in their learning from their peers and multi-age groupings. Inherent in this pattern is the broadness the weavers found in learning at tables versus the narrowness of learning at a desk. According to some of the weavers, desk learning confined not only the body but also the mind. Another pattern visible in each tapestry relates to the transition from Banyan Tree School to other schools. It is evident how the weavers dealt with this in different ways. The last pattern seen in the tapestries is parental involvement. The uniqueness relates to the parental involvement that was experienced directly or indirectly.

CHAPTER FIVE

Examining the Texture of the Tapestries

Weaving is an age old act. What weavers do with the threads is limited only by their imaginations. The metaphor of weaving is chosen for this study as it intricately portrays the layering of each student's experiences. Let us now take a look at the reason for the weaving.

Eleven years of teaching at Banyan Tree School, a primary school, brought me in touch with many children. The program offered to them was one child-centered, play-based, and integrated. Children were grouped in multi-aged or family groupings and were able to progress at their own rate, within the continuous progress component of the program. As I observed in the classroom the questions arose, "What are the children receiving and bringing to this early school experience? Does it hold any meaning for them?" Even after leaving Banyan Tree School these questions lingered in my mind. Several years ago meeting the mother of a former student, whose son was, at the time, in grade 10. The mother told me about a conversation she had had with her son. He said during his early years at Banyan Tree School he learned how to learn and how to think. He went on to say that when he compared himself to other students, who had not had the same early school experiences, he noticed a number of differences in how learning was approached. His conversation increased my curiosity and motivated me to delve into the world of meaning of the early school experience of four young adults who, as children, attended Banyan Tree School. To gain the parental perspective of early schooling, the parents of these young adults were also part of the study. The two basic research questions for the former students were: "What were the early school experiences like for you?" and "What meaning did they have for you?" For the parents the two guiding questions were: "What were your perceptions of the early school experiences for your child?" and "What meaning evolved for him/her from these experiences?"

Conversational research was used to seek answers to these questions. As one delves into the experiential world of students, one automatically thinks about the school program, its many attributes and structure as well as how the student operates within the setting, and with whom. All these are important aspects of the student's school world. To come to a deeper understanding of this world, and to discover its meaning for the student, a naturalistic (Guba, 1981) or qualitative paradigm was utilized as it rests on the assumption that there are many realities.

Each of the four students and I conversed on two or three occasions, each time probing more deeply. Gradually a view of their early school experience and grasp its multiple meanings emerged. Then, a separate conversation with each student's parent(s) took place, with the exception of one student whose mother passed away before an opportunity occurred to converse with her. A final conversation involving each student, his/her parent(s), and the researcher gave the participants an opportunity to share each other's perceptions and to ask additional questions relating to the data in order to gain a greater understanding.

Having established a good rapport between the participants and myself, our conversations were free-flowing thus facilitating a dialectic questioning and answering of matters pertinent to this study. Each conversation was taped on a small, voice activated tape recorder. Varying amounts of time elasped between conversations. This time allowed for the transcription and analysis of the tapes and further reflections.

Through the conversations, multiple layers of each student's early school experience were revealed as well as those aspects of it which were significant to him/her. These, along with the parental perspectives, became the weft threads which have created the patterns of meaning in each tapestry. The weft threads were woven into the warp threads, the underlying philosophical base of Banyan Tree School. In a tapestry these warp threads are incredibly strong, yet not apparent, however; without them the tapestry has no substance. The color and texture of the threads, interacted with the weavers (students, parents, and teacher) as the tapestries were woven. Upon closer examination of each tapestry one could see the depth of the weavers' visions that need to be further investigated.

The weavers in the study had one feature in common, they all, at some time, were a part of Banyan Tree School, however, they experienced it in different ways and at different depths. In spite of the variance in texture, color, and complexity, the tapestries together reveal five dominant patterns which constitute the major findings of this study. These are as follows:

1) a wholistic view of learning incorporating the nature of children in the process of learning;
2) the role of the teacher in opening up opportunities for children to take ownership of their learning through making choices, assuming responsibility, gaining independence and, most importantly, through pursuing interests;
3) socialization in learning through their peers and multi-age grouping;
4) making the transition from Banyan Tree School to other schools; and
5) parental involvement: (direct or indirect).

My Reflections: The Weavers and Their Tapestries

Coming into this study I felt a great deal of apprehension relative to my closeness to it and the length of time that had elapsed since the students' early schooling. Would they even remember it and if they did, would what they remembered be sufficient for a study? Would they even want to participate in such a study? Consequently I embarked on this study I really had no idea about what would be revealed. It was somewhat surprising to me that, for the most part, they could not recall experiences in sufficient detail to tell a story about them. Instead, more feelings about their early schooling than specific memories of it were indicated. As Tarren said, "It's more of just a feeling when I think about it [Banyan Tree School] than a specific memory" (January 25, 1992). What surprised me even more were the experiences the former students articulated they had taken with them from their early schooling: how, more specifically, the early school years had influenced them as people and learners.

Learning is a private affair. Although I had often wondered what the children were absorbing from their everyday experience in the classroom, I could only be aware of their experiences through outward signs such as body language, discussions between children, and discussions between the children and me. It was impossible to really enter their world. As Cullingford (1991) says,

> Even formal aspects of learning remain a private experience, one of individual struggle and personal meaning in which other people, teachers or friends, only impinge at times.... It is also an experience which is unstructured and unplanned, individual not only by necessity but by default. (p. 116)

However, through our conversations it became possible, at least in part, to enter this world. The conversations afforded us, the participants the opportunity to delve into the private world of their early schooling to a greater depth than had been envisioned. What power there was in those years for them. It wasn't one or two aspects of the early years that influenced any one of the former students but rather it was a layering process, one experience added to another, over time.

When looking back at something and reflecting on it, it is seen in a different light. This adage is true of my experiences in this study. Through collecting and analyzing the data, and then writing it up, I feel I have re-experienced Banyan Tree School, this time at a deeper and more profound level. It has been a privilege comingto know the students in greater depth than I did when they were children. They shared so openly and deeply the private worlds of their early schooling. From this experience I feel a deep sense of humility.

The process of doing a study of this nature has been facinating. Reflecting on some aspects of it may assist other researchers who are interested in doing similar studies. The aspects I want to reflect on include the involvement of the participants, and the values of the pilot study and the reader who checked on the analysis of the data.

The participants became co-investigators in the study through answering and asking questions pertinent to the early school experience of each student and the perceptions of the parents. Through this dialectic questioning and answering the meaning of the early school experiences of the students was uncovered. Each conversation with the participants afforded us an opportunity to explore, probe, and discover in more depth what the early school experience provided for the students and what influence it had upon them as learners as they journeyed beyond Banyan Tree School. In the process of recalling those early years, Tarren reflected, "Just remembering brings back a lot--remembering makes you remember more" (January 25, 1992). The sharing of some slides taken when the participants attended Banyan Tree School was valuable. They brought out further memories and reinforced others.

Undertaking this study years after the students attended Banyan Tree School has brought an interesting perspective to it. Since their primary school years, the students went on to experience a variety of educational programs in different ways. A multiple layering of school and life experiences gave the students a broader base on which to build their reflections of their early school experiences. This range of experiences brought a perspective to the study that would not have been possible had the study been done while the students attended Banyan Tree School or even a few years later.

Another aspect of this study, which later became an important part of it, was the pilot phase. It involved three conversations with Denise, one with her parents, and a final conversation with both Denise and her mother, Louise. During my third conversation with Denise I found my probing was revealing the same or similar answers. On the basis of this, I made two decisions: to have two conversations with the other former students, and to have a final conversation with each student and his/her parent(s). This final conversation was an important one for sharing each other's perceptions, and for asking additional questions related to the data to clarify it. Oftentimes further reflections, which led to deeper insights of the early school years, were revealed through this final conversation.

The pilot study also enhanced my ability to ask the kinds of questions that facilitated a deeper probing of the students' early schooling. As Gadamer (1975) says, "To question means to lay open, to place in the open. As against the solidity of opinions, questioning makes the object and all its possibilities fluid" (p. 330).

My final reflection on the study relates to the value of having an outside reader who read through all the transcripts and summaries of the taped conversations of all the study's participants and consequently checked on the accuracy of my analysis. She also assisted me in formulating questions that helped to probe more deeply into the students' early school experiences. Having an outside reader was necessary because of my closeness to the study. She helped to assure the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, four creteria outlined by Guba (1981) for assessing naturalistic research.

A Closer Examination of Five Patterns in the Tapestries

So much of the research done on the school experience has involved testing. This study attempts to research beyond the quantitative paradigm. Its investigation delves deeper than the superficiality of a test result. Goodlad (1984a) points out that testing and test scores are not the answer in determining the effectiveness of schools or the meaningfulness of the school experience. Instead, we need to turn to the school's "product", the student, to determine what has been effective or meaningful to him/her.

This study re-affirms Reifel's (1988) view that older children are able to articulate an elaborate understanding and meaning of the framework that school gives to their lives. They have great vision about their need to learn actively with their minds, hearts, bodies and senses. We, as adults and educators, need to actively listen to, and make provision for, what they are saying. The weavers in the study have revealed some of these visions in their tapestries. As we view these, within the patterns, we soon realize that they are not new to education. However, the significance lies in the fact that these visions are not coming from philosophers, educators, or administors but from students and their parents: people whose voices give authenticity to the study. They have reaffirmed the visions of the historical "weavers" in Chapter 2 as well as the basic beliefs about children imbeded in my philosophy of education. We must now examine more closely the textures of the tapestries to gain greater insight and understanding of the visions woven into them.

A Wholistic View of Learning

A wholistic view of learning incorporating the nature of children and how they learn is an intricate and dominant pattern in each tapestries. The texture of this pattern reveals strong attitudes about what learning in school should be like for students. These attitudes are primarily based on what the weavers had experienced in their early schooling and have been expressed with confidence. They reinforce Goodlad's (1984a) comment, "It is important that children come out of the primary phase of schooling into the elementary with a high level of confidence in themselves and a positive view of their ability to learn" (p. 334).

When considering the nature of learning Shor (1987) concludes that, "Learning is not the transfer of skills or information from a talking teacher to a passive student.... Learning does not define students as empty vessels to be filled with packaged information on a thin path of facts and figures" (p. 26). Instead, learning should be much more interactive, inviting students to become more actively engaged in the learning process where there is emphasis on learning how to learn (Dewey, 1938; Goodlad, Klein & Associates, 1970; Katz & Chard, 1989). Learning should not only engage students for the present but must also pave the way or promote it in the future. Concurring with Reynolds (1990), educators need to know and offer to students,

> The skills and knowledge that the students need to form the warp of their learning. We need not tell them everything there is to know. Indeed, we cannot. We need to trust that, given the tools they need, they will weave their own, unique and valuable-to-them product. Their learning may never become a visible product, but immersion in the process points to living-as-learning while being involved in something that touches their lives allows students to make the process, the product, and the tools and techniques their own, part of themselves. It allows them to internalize and put them to use in their lives. What we give them through the processs initiated, perhaps, in the classroom in perturbation, encouragement, support, and the tools to learn--maybe even the gift of a lifelong love of learning. (p. 124)

The students in this study have revealed through the patterns woven into their tapestries that learning how to learn did not result from any one experience but was learned through a multi-layering process involving questioning, reflection, redoing, problem solving, discussion, sharing, and discovery. All these were experienced within a basic structure which was found in the warp threads of the program at Banyan Tree School. This underlying structure was the foundation for the freedom the students' said they experienced in their learning. Dewey (1938) says that this freedom is found in the continuity of developing experience in an environment where "conditions interact with personal needs, desires, purposes, and capacities to create the experience which is had" (p. 44). He maintains that "the only freedom that is of enduring importance is freedom of intelligence, that is to say, freedom of observation and of judgement exercised in (sic) behalf of purposes that are intrinsically worthwhile" (p. 61).

Interwoven in the tapestries is the students' intrinsic motivation to learn based on learning experiences directly related to their individual needs and interests. These experiences ignited the fire of learning in them and allowed the fires to burn in many directions. We, as educators, never really know what learners will take from the experiences we provide for them. However, we must have faith and trust in them by engaging their minds and giving them the freedom to learn, to think, to do, to be. Children engaged in their learning should be able to mold and shape it in accordance to their inner desires in much the same way they would when creating with a clay or paper mach. In order for learning to be meaningful for children they need to feel the gooeyness of it, to have it stick to them so that it becomes an integral part of them.

Denise's conclusions about her learning at Banyan Tree School reveal the impact her early schooling had on her later life.

> I just know personally I would never, ever give back my time that I had at Banyan Tree School. It was such an enjoyable time and everything was so carefree and it was, sort of, "Do it the way you want to" and we weren't treated like children in a dictatorial way--"Do this, do that!" We were told, "Well, you have to get this done and that done". A lot of that stems from (the teachers) not being rigid, structured people in the sense that we were able to do it as long as we got it all done.... There are not very many open schools and that's really a shame because they could just enhance your learning so much. My independence, freedom of choice, my free

> will, and everything, I don't think, would have been so predominant if I would have been in a structured environment. (October 13, 1990)

But , perhaps, Barton's tapestry hints at problems to which we need to attend. Could more have been done to alleviate some of the frustration he experienced in learning in his early years?

Role of the Teacher

Another pattern that stands out in the tapestries is the multi-facetted role of the teachers involvement in children's learning. No child benefits from schools whose main lesson is to live life passively, fenced in by massive constraints on self-expression and self-fulfillment. All children need to experience schools that are humane, open places where they can fully explore their learning. How can this be achieved? A closer examination of the role of the teacher pattern reveals some answers to this question.

The weavers have stated very clearly that in order to really experience learning, children must be provided with opportunities to take ownership of it. This is achieved through assuming responsibility, gaining independence, making choices, and most importantly through pursuing interests. Having these opportunities the students found their early school experiences to be rich and varied and have greatly influenced their present attitudes towards learning.

Basically this pattern reflects very vividly the role the teacher has in interpreting the curriculum and engaging children in it in meaningful ways. Just as children are not passive objects of education, neither can teachers be passive transmitters of the curriculum. Teachers need to interpret the curriculum broadly, taking into account the children's experience, interests and needs. Dewey (1938) gave great importance to this principle.

> The case of science is here employed as an illustration of progressive selection of subject-matter resident in present experience towards organization: an organization which is free, not externally imposed, because it is in accord with the growth of experience itself. The utilization of subject-matter found in the present life-experience of the learner towards science is perhaps the best illustration that can be found of the basic principle of using existing experience as a means of carrying learners on to a wider, more refined, and better organized environing world, physical and human, than is found in the experiences from which educative growth sets out. (pp. 81-82)

Dewey (1938) also advocated the abolishment of a set curriculum because it limited the relevancy of children's learning.

> The field of experience is very wide and it varies in its contents from place to place and from time to time. A single course of studies for all progressive schools is out of the guestion: it would mean abandoning the fundamental principle of connection with life-experiences. (p. 78)

This concept is being considered here because many of the students found much superficiality and irrelevance in their learning beyond Banyan Tree School. The prime reason for this, which is woven into the tapestries, is the teachers' concern about covering the curriculum. Michael, one of our weavers, points out that he missed being involved in his learning beyond his primary years.

> The teachers didn't really get into any depth. It was like they were just doing their job and trying to get through that curriculum, instead of sometimes really wanting to educate the students. They were just trying to get through the topics. (April 25, 1992)

He indicates that the underlying difference between getting "through the topics" and really educating is interest.

> I can say that a lot of that is bringing interest into it [learning]. I don't know how someone can learn if they are not really interested in it.... If I'm not interested in it, I can memorize and "learn" it, but as soon as the exam is over, two days later I will have forgotten it. It's only the things that I have interest in and that I want to learn more about that I really remember. (April 25, 1992)

Whitehead (1957) also addressed the concerns Michael and the other weavers have expressed about superficiality and irrelevancy in learning.

> In training a child to activity of thought, above all things we must beware of that I call "inert ideas"--that is to say, ideas that are merely received into the mind without being utilised, or tested, or thrown into fresh combinations.... The result of teaching small parts of a large number of subjects is the passive reception of disconnected ideas, not illumined with any spark of vitality. Let the main ideas which are introduced into a child's education be few and important, and let them be thrown into every combination possible. The child should make them his own, and should understand their application here and now in the circumstances of his actual life. From the very beginning of his education, the child should experience the joy of discovery. The discovery which he has to make, is that general ideas give an understanding of that stream of events which pours through his life, which is his life. (pp. 1-2)

When children become involved in their learning by pursuing topics of interest to them, they learn to read, write, compute, deal with people, their environment, and the relationships among them--the inquiry into learning and life begins and grows. As Goodlad (1984a) says, "Students read to gain knowledge and then bring it to bear on the problems being pursued. This is what we do in 'real life.' Schools should not be made 'unreal'" (p. 335).

Teachers, by broadly interpreting the curriculum, are more able to utilize children's experience and interests in the learning process and, therefore, more adequately meet their (children's) needs. "What we want is to have the child come with a whole mind and a whole body, and leave school with a fuller mind and an ever healthier body" (Dworkin, 1959, p. 82).

Another aspect of the teachers' role in interpreting the curriculum inherent in the tapestries, is how it is integrated. In relation to this, Dewey states.

> All studies arise from aspects of the one earth and the one life lived upon it. We do not have a series of stratified earth, one of which is mathematical, another physical, another historical and so on.... We live in a world where all sides are bound together. All studies grow out of relations to the one great common world. When the child lives in varied but concrete and active relationship to this common world, his studies are naturally unified. It will no longer be a problem to correlate studies. The teacher will not have to resort to all sorts of devices to weave a little arithmetic into the history lesson, and the like. Relate the school to life, and all studies are of necessity correlated. (Dworkin, 1959, p. 88)

What Dewey is advocating here is a natural integration of learning which children are very capable of doing if given the opportunity. Denise, our first weaver, and her mother, Louise, commented on this when they said, "There never seemed to be end to anything" (Louise, July 20, 1992). "We never stopped--a project never really ended. There was always something that went on from a project into what else you were doing" (Denise, July 20, 1992). As the children made natural bridges that took them into different fields of knowledge, I always marvelled at the perseverance, creativity, and problem solving that became an integral part of their learning. One may ask what would the attributes be of an activity that would engage children so completely. Dewey says:

> An activity or project must, of course, be within the range of the experience of pupils and connected with their needs.... The test of a good project is whether it is sufficiently full and complex to demand a variety of responses from different children and permit each to go at it and make his contribution in a way which is characteristic of himself. The further test or mark of a good activity, educationally speaking, is that it have a sufficiently long time-span so that a series of endeavors and explorations are involved in it, and included in such a way that each step opens up a new field, raises new questions, arouses a demand for further knowledge, and suggests what to do next on the basis of what has been accomplished and the knowledge thereby gained. (Dworkin, 1959, p. 122)

To conclude,

> The teacher's task is to provide an environment and opportunities which are sufficiently challenging for children and yet not so difficult as to be outside their reach. There has to be the right mixture of the familiar and the novel, the right match to the stage of learning the child has reached. (Plowden, 1967, p. 196)

Socialization in Learning

The third major pattern that emerges in the tapestries is socialization in learning through peer relationships and multi-age groupings. Schools provide opportunities for children to meet and interact with a large number of other children. This meeting and interacting facilitates and enhances children's social development, particularly in the early years at school. The participants in the study wove into their tapestries how the program at Banyan Tree School gave them opportunities to explore and make friendships, to understand relationships, and to share their learning with each other within a diverse socio-economic and ethnic population. An integral part of these opportunities was the multi-age or family groupings they experienced in their early schooling.

A study done by Rosenholtz and Simpson (1984) contrasted the impact of classroom organization upon "students' academic self-concepts, their perceptions of their peers and their perceptions of school" (p. 21) in uni- and multidimensional classrooms. Their findings revealed that a unidimensional classroom defines academic ability and work narrowly and uses a restricted range of performance criteria to evaluate children. These types of classrooms assigned tasks that limited children's abilities and interests which resulted in superficiality in their learning and students having lower self-evaluations. Multidimensional classes, on the other hand, offered a much broader range of activities which encouraged varying levels of skills to be applied. These classes valued a variety of performance criteria and gave children more choice about what they wanted to do, when and how to do it. Children from the multidimensional classes experienced greater depth in their learning and higher self-evaluations. According to their definitions, Rosenholtz and Simpson (1984) would have classified classrooms in Banyan Tree School as multidimensional.

Competition amongst students attending Banyan Tree School was minimized, allowing students to get involved in, and be accepted at their, particular stage of development. Cooperation replaced competition as children learned together. The weavers in the study would agree with Katz, Evangelou and Hartman's (1990) comments on multi-age groupings.

> Because multi-age groupings invite cooperation and other forms of prosocial behavior and appears to minimize competitive pressures on children, discipline problems that seem inherent in competitive environments are often substantially reduced. The cooperation that can

> flourish in a mixed-age group can generate a class ethos marked by caring rather than competitiveness. (p. 5)

Another aspect of multi-age grouping relates to Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development" which is defined as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Wertsch, cited in Katz et al, 1990, p. 18). This relates to how older children can become teachers of younger children because the distance between the older and younger children's understanding of something is smaller than the distance between the understanding of children and adults. Interwoven into some of the tapestries is this concept of "peer teaching"--children who have interanalized their learning are able to help others in their learning.

Mobility in one's learning also became a significant aspect of socialization in learning. This benefited both the children and the teachers. Let us first consider the benefits to the children. As they moved about the classroom they grouped and regrouped themselves according to the task at hand. Throughout this process of grouping and regrouping the children talked to each other while engaging in a task. "Much learning in a good educational setting receives direction and takes shape in the course of ordinary conversation" (Featherstone, 1976, p. 11). Through children's interaction language, experience, and intelligence share an important relationship with each other. As Dean (1992) points out,

> The ability to use language determines not only the nature of a person's relationships with others and the ability to cooperate but to some extent also the ability to think, since language is the medium of a good deal of human thought. Vygotsky (1978) suggests that children "undergo quite profound changes in their understanding by engaging in joint activity and conversation with other people." (p. 14)

Movement and conversation, as revealed in the tapestries, brought another dimension, to the classroom: discipline. Dewey discusses its development as children interact in their learning.

> If the end in view is the development of a spirit of social cooperation and community life, discipline must grow out of and be relative to this. There is little order of one sort where things are in process of construction; there is a certain disorder in any workshop; there is not silence, persons are not engaged in mainstreaming certain fixed physical positions; their arms are not folded; they are not holding their books thus and so. They are doing a variety of things, and there is the confusion, the bustle, that results from activity. But out of occupation, out of doing things that are to produce results, and out of doing these in a social and cooperative way, there is born a discipline of its own kind and type. (Dworkin, 1959, pp. 44-41)

This self-discipline helps to give children structure in their learning allowing them to "fly" with it.

Now let us consider the benefits mobility in learning had for the teachers. Like the children, they too were able to move freely about the classroom. This freedom allowed them to gain greater insight into the nature of the children and their developmental needs. Concurring with this point of view, Dewey (1938) says that without freedom,

> It is practically impossible for a teacher to gain knowledge of individuals with whom he is concerned. Enforced quiet and acquirescence prevent pupils from disclosing their real natures. They enforce artificial uniformity. They put seeming before being. (p. 62)

A final aspect of mobility in learning inherent in the tapestries is the accessibility of the teachers to the children. The participants indicated that the teachers were "there for them": questioning, facilitating, and guiding their learning, allowing it to flow in many directions.

Before finishing the examination of this pattern, there is need to examine one more aspect of it, namely, the broadness that tables allow versus the narrowness that desks provide in learning. Tables and chairs rather than desks were found in Banyan Tree School. The majority of the students found that tables offered a broader scope in their learning and closer proximity of other learners. Dewey tells of his experience in trying to find furniture appropriate for children actively engaged in the learning.

> I was ... trying to find desks and chairs which seemed thoroughly suitable from all points of view--artistic, hygienic, and educational--to the needs of the children. We had a good deal of difficulty in finding what we needed, and finally one dealer, more intelligent than the rest, made this remark: "I'm afraid we have not what you want. You want something at which children may work; these are all for listening".... The attitude of listening means, comparatively speaking, passivity, absorption; that there are certain ready-made materials which are there, which have been prepared by the school superintendent, the board, the teacher, and of which the child is to take in as much as possible in the least time possible. (Dworkin, 1959, pp. 50-51)

This kind of confinement is completely contradictory to the nature of children and how they learn. Examination of the tapestries reveals that the weavers experienced this contradiction many times in their learning beyond Banyan Tree School.

Transition from Banyan Tree School to Other Schools

Further survey of the tapestries, reveals that making the transition from Banyan Tree School to other schools is the fourth common pattern. In our western society children go to school mostly because they have to and it becomes one of two major worlds in which they live for at least 12 years of their lives; the other major world being their home. Very often children spend much time in school without experiencing a great sense of personal fulfilment or individual curiosity. However, because children are naturally adaptable they learn somehow to cope with the particular demands, excitements, and tensions that schools provide. This was certainly true of the majority of the weavers in this study. As indicated in their tapestries, they experienced a fundamental change of teaching and learning style when they left Banyan Tree School and journeyed into their next school experiences. The weavers wove into their tapestries the situations/circumstances in their later schooling where they did not receive what they wanted and/or needed in their learning. Examining each of the tapestries more closely it is evident that these difficulties were dealt with in ways unique to each student. Denise comments further about the transition she experienced and how she coped with it.

> It took a while to adjust, I'll admit that. It did take awhile to adjust because you were not used to being so restricted and you felt confined--well, I want to get up. I want to move. I don't want to sit here all the time. You get used to it because you are doing the same thing day after day. It's repetitive and you learn to cope with things. It's hard in the beginning because there was such a change from having almost complete freedom to having almost none. (August 23, 1990)

Acknowledging these major changes, I asked Denise if more could have been done by the teachers at Banyan Tree School to make the transition easier. Her response was, "I think if [the next school] would have been more like Banyan Tree School was--with more freedom and less structured learning--just sort of let everything happen as it happened, but it wasn't" (August 23, 1990).

Impinging upon the transition that Denise comments on here and those made by the other students, are the factors that have already been discussed within the first three patterns. Creating these difficult transitions was the chasm that existed between the complexities of children and how they learn and what was imposed upon them in their learning. Dewey (1938) elaborates.

> The traditional scheme is, in essence, one of imposition from above and from outside. It imposes adult standards, subject matter, and methods upon those who are only growing slowly toward maturity. The gap is so great that the required subject-matter, the methods of learning and of behaving are foreign to the existing capacities of the young. They are beyond the reach of the experience the young learners already possess. Consequently, they must be imposed.... But the gulf between the mature or adult products and the experiences and abilities of the young is so wide that the very situation forbids much active participation by pupils in the development of what is taught. Theirs is to do--and learn, as it was the part of the six hundred to do and die. Learning here means acquisition of what already is incorporated in books and in the heads of the elders. Moreover, that which is taught is thought of as essentially static. It is taught as a finished product, with little regard either to the ways in which it was originally built up or to changes that will occur in the future. It is to a large extent the cultural product of societies that assumed the future would be much like the past, and yet it is used as educational food in a society where change is the rule, not the exception. (pp. 18-19)

Michael's mother, Susan, expressed concern about the gap about which Dewey speaks.

> There are just so many kids deadened in the schools. I still say it--all these young women coming into the college and it takes us two years to wake them up. So it seems they have lost that kind of inner spirit for learning--well some of them have all submerged. It's very well covered. (May 3, 1992)

She went on to explain what she meant by an "inner spirit".

> It is partly what Michael is talking about when he used the word interest and that kind of spark for finding out about things. Young children have it. It's just part of them. And it gets translated--I think when kids are 8, 9, 10 into more topical interests rather than material interest--playing. What happens in the school system? It's there--it's a flame. Then it gets a little bit lower, little bit lower then it starts to get closed in. A lot of people lose it entirely. (May 3, 1992)

Michael responds to his mother's comments and indicates how he dealt with later schooling experiences that didn't meet his learning needs. "No, I don't think I've lost that flame. If there was something that was going on in the school that I couldn't change it, I just said, Piss on it and did it on my own." That's what I've always done" (May 3, 1992).

Woven into Michael's tapestry is how he specifically dealt with the difficulties he experienced as he made the transition to other schools. When we discussed these, Michael's mother shared some research that has been done on student resistance in high schools.

> There quite a bit because the drop out rate in the States is so extreme and it's starting to be here as well. There's one gal in Chicago, her name is Michelle Fine. Her initial study was on teenage suicide. She's a sociologist. What she in essence found out was (it was kind of an astonishing finding) that there were more kids, who had stayed in school,

> committing suicide than who had dropped out. The assumption is always that these were the unwell kids so she started investigating.... These kids who were dropping out were actually more emotionally healthy, as a group than these kids who stayed in. Maybe they weren't socially healthy but they were more emotionally healthy. So then the whole thing comes [down to], "What is it that gives kids the where for all to be able to resist things that are not good for them?" Some kids can manage.... Michael is saying that he could manage to stay within the system--like see it, understand it, and play the game of it, but he was still resisting by getting out of it [particularly while he was in high school]. (May 3, 1992)

It is interesting to note three of the four students experienced more freedom again in their learning when they reached college and university. As Denise said, "I think college really reminded me a lot of the earlier years when you had the freedom [to learn]" (August 23, 1990). Barton, on the other hand, experienced a number of transitions in his learning and none of these met his particular needs.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is the final pattern that emerged in the tapestries. Recognizing parents are their children's first and most influential teachers, Banyan Tree School had an open door policy for parental involvement. Many different school function and programs as well as the development and construction of a creative playground were realized as a result of collaboration with parents. Parents were partners in many aspects of the educational process at Banyan Tree School. Umansky (1983) found that teachers and parents need to establish a stronger bond with one another.

> Closer contact between parents and teachers will give each a more complete picture of the child's abilities and improved consistency in working toward desired goals. Most important, perhaps, the child will identify both the school and the home as places to learn, and parents and teachers as sources of learning. (as cited in Berger, 1987, p. 17)

Parental involvement was widely defined at Banyan Tree School as anything from direct involvement in the classroom and on field trips to indirect involvement which offered support to the school and children in their learning. All the parents in the study expressed how comfortable they felt about the school's program and what it offered to their children. One parent also expressed how much she learned about her child from observing him and others in the process of learning in the classroom. She also gained further knowledge of skills, like listening, that she used in parenting.

As the examination of this pattern concludes, I want to say that the teachers and parents of Banyan Tree School were each seen as founts of knowledge as they assumed their respective roles. These roles were, for the most part, reciprocal. At the heart of this reciprocity were the children.

Implications of the Patterns in the Four Tapestries

The weavers in this study have raised many fundamental questions, concerns, and issues about education. Although these are not new, they are nevertheless given resonsance by the evidence the students and their parents have woven into their tapestries. What we learn from these tapestries of meaning may be vital to our understanding of what schools can and should be like for children in their early schooling and beyond. What changes need to be made so that learning in a classroom comes alive for both students and teachers? Children, I believe, are our future, therefore, we must give it to them through their learning. Let us now look at the implications of the major patterns found in our weaver's tapestries.

Learning and the Role of the Teacher

The first two patterns, learning and the role of the teacher, are so closely connected their implications have been considered together. When we look at our world today some fundamental questions arise. What kinds of men and women do we want our children to become? What should they know? How should they live? What can they hope for? Considering these questions, it is my belief that the main goal in education is to have children feel good about themselves, to offer them basic skills to use in their learning, and to instill a desire in them to be lifelong learners who are capable of handling the challenges that lie ahead for them. "As we cannot educate for the future because we do not know what it holds, it is, therefore, imperative that education develop and enhance the authentic experience within an environment from which the authentic individual can emerge" (personal communication, J. Boorman, February 21, 1992). How can this be accomplished? Within the tapestries some answers to this question are evident.

Children come to their learning with a richness and diversity of background and ability which is very evident among the weavers of the study. Therefore, their learning can never be wholly planned.

> Chance associations or insights play as significant role as assiduous accumulation of knowledge. Even teachers, for all their detailed planning, have to adapt to how the class responds, to interruptions and to the opportunities that present themselves in the dynamics of the classroom.

> Children's actual learning is not only unplanned but a matter of chance, and rarely fully aware. (Cullingford, 1991, p. 116)

However, the students clearly indicated a need for structure in their learning that would allow for much more freedom in it--a freedom to take ownership of their learning through making choices, assuming responsibility, gaining independence, and most importantly through pursuing their interests. In other words, the students strongly advocated being at the heart of their learning throughout their schooling as they had been in their early school years. One way to do this would be to involve them in an emergent curriculum designed to promote their growth in each developmental area building on each child's strengths and interests. Such a curriculum "is designed to provide active learning experiences which children can use to construct their own understanding" (personal communication, B. Jones, (1987) A teacher developing an emergent curriculum,

> Begins with ideas for children's learning and provides materials and interactions in organized space and time. But as she pays attention to what is actually happening for children, she modifies plans on the spot when necessary and responds to children's needs and interests. In this way she is respecting their diversity. (B. Jones, personal communication, 1987).

Elaborating on how an emergent curriculum is planned and evaluated, she asks, "(1) What are the objectives for chidren? (2) What are the developmental tasks of children? (3) How do children learn? (4) What are the possible sources of curriculum? and (5) What ideas can we generate together?" (B. Jones, personal communication, 1987). Inherent in these questions is the underlying structure that the students spoke about and needed in order to experience freedom in their learning.

Implications for teachers and administrators.

How teachers teach depends upon their view of the world, their vision of what it means to educate, their personal commitment, and the strength of their beliefs. An element of conservatism (Featherstone, 1976) exists amongst many teachers, therefore, there is a distinct preference for doing things the way they have been done. However, from my experience of teaching practicing teachers, I believe that many of them, consciously or unconsciously, want to change or modify what they do with children in their classrooms. However, great risk is involved in this process. Therefore, teachers to be successful as change agents must be given a harmonious mixture of knowledge, guidance, support, and autonomy by both the school and central office administrations.

Implications for curriculum planners.

Goodlad (1984a) advocates broadening the scope of curriculum beyond the primary years.

> Whereas the primary phase emphasized the acquisition of academic, social, and physical skills, the elementary phase emphasizes their use. The relentless monotony of telling, questioning, textbooks, and workbooks which we found to be so characteristic of classes from the fourth grade up must be in part replaced by activities calling for student involvement in planning and in the collaborative execution of plans. A significant part of the day is to be spent in large and small group activities dependent upon cooperative, social behavior. Social goals parallel the academic in importance. All such activities are to be laced with academics--reading an array of books to find the answers to the problem

> or issue chosen for analysis; writing sports based on information so acquired; planning and using an effective means of resporting the results to th entire class; preparing evaluation devices for determining the learnings acquired. (p. 335)

The basic skills that students need in their learning grow out of activities where they are more actively engaged.

Apparent in the tapestries is the weavers' beliefs that basic skills are developed through a curriculum that is integrated, relevant, and therefore, meaningful to the learner. Implicit in this is the role of curriculum planners to develop a curriculum that allows the

> students, teachers, materials ... [to] interact as the curriculum grows, lives. Curriculum may be planned but it cannot be pre-set. Curriculum must be allowed to live as it becomes, as it intertwines, as it weaves itself into the daily, minute-ly interactions of students, teachers, materials, milieux, structures and backgrounds, setting new structures, new backgrounds, new milieux, new richness built on, woven on what is there, what happens, what becomes. (Reynolds, 1990, p. 119)

In order to accomplish this, curriculum planners need to view curriculum critically, paring it down to the basic skills needed by students in their learning and broadening its content in such a way that students can really relate to and get involved in it--interest is paramount in learning. This would allow the students more input and freedom into their learning which have been strongly advocated by students in this study.

Implications for teacher educators.

In teacher education, program collaboration between universities and classrooms are needed so that both are in tune with each other and have the learner at the heart of all their endeavors. As Featherstone (1976) says, "A school of education not in touch with classrooms is in danger of losing an important part of its mind--the necessary understanding of the world of practice--and its soul as well" (p. 152). When curriculums become better connected to the lives of the learners and emerge around them, teachers will need to have a broader view of curriculum and its development. Therefore, preservice and inservice teachers will need be able to explore the purposes of curriculum more deeply to discover how it can be developed around the experiences, interests and needs of the learners for which it is intended. This will involve an indepth and working knowledge of child development, as well as a development and honing of observation skills to enable teachers to pick up on children's needs and interests and be able to provide for them. Teacher education programs will need to prepare teachers who will be able to bring out the potential of each child utilizing developmentally appropriate practices (Bredekamp, 1987). This will involve providing pre and inservice teachers with meaningful student teaching experiences which will give them confidence in their teaching styles and in curriculum development.

Implications for parents.

As curriculums are modified to be more in line with learners, parents will need to be informed of these changes and how they will, in fact, enhance the learning of their children.

Socialization in Learning

Implications for educators.

We, as educators, need to be aware that learning takes place in different types of organization and that children learn a tremendous amount from each other about their own learning and about school in general. This is very evident in the tapestries woven in the study. Cullingford (1991) points out that,

> An important strand of a child's development is that initiation into the shared experiences of the group.... What is called the "hidden" curriculum consists not only of the implications that underlie the more formal curriculum, but the constant sharing of information that takes place all the time. Information may be delivered in lessons, but attitudes towards this information are passed on amongst the children themselves, through discussion and overhead remarks. (p. 48)

Students have a great deal to offer to each other as they come from diverse backgrounds. In this study some of the weavers indicated that this led them to be more tolerant, accepting, and understanding of each other and has carried over into their present life.

As already mentioned, the majority of the weavers revealed through their tapestries, that multi-age grouping greatly influenced their learning and their relationships with people. A major implication for educators regarding multi-age grouping is Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development". (Wertsch, cited in Katz et al, 1990, p. 18) There seem to be great benefits to children helping each other--showing patience and developing a greater understanding of learning difficulties as well as helping children learn how to care for and adapt to others. This, I believe has not been looked at closely enough in the learning process.

Transition from Banyan Tree School to Other Schools

Implications for curriculum planners, teachers, and school jurisdictions.

The weavers in this study have indicated in a variety of ways that if an educational system is to be effective, it must meet learners wherever they are in their development. They have also pointed out that learners should be given scope in their learning, therefore, allowing for more divergency than convergency in it. For Shor (1987) this "means opposing the mechanical pedagogy and the unequal tracking that take some to success and most others to cheap labor and underemployment, to despair and anti-intellectualism" (p. 26).

As the learning patterns in the tapestries are examined more closely it is apparent that two of the weavers were victims of an educational system that did not meet their needs: Barton, who experienced a lot of difficulty in his learning throughout his school career, and Michael, who came to his learning easily. Each of these, students as seen in their tapestries, coped with the mechanical pedagogy that was offered to them in different ways. This pattern has far reaching implications for curriculum planners, teachers, and school jurisdictions. Programs need to be authorized and developed that meet the needs of learners. Inherent in this pattern are some of the implications already discussed in preceding patterns. Barton needed to move into a practical based program, even in upper elementary, that would have been of interest to him, enticing him to continue to improve his academic skills almost vicariously. Michael, on the other hand, needed to be challenged, given his mind, in a program that fostered his many interests. Tarren and Denise found ways of coping with the adjustments that they had to make in their schooling after they left Banyan Tree School. However, they too, like Barton and Michael, needed to experience a greater continuity throughout their school experience.

Parental Involvement

Implications for administrators and teachers.

The weavers in the study valued the parental involvement they experienced, however, direct or indirect it was for them. A major implication of this pattern is that parents are indeed valuable partners in the educative process. There is much to be gained for children, teachers, and parents when parents are treated as partners in the education of their children. These benefits are evident in the tapestries. Therefore, schools need to keep their doors open to parents so that they feel good about the varied and meaningful contributions they can offer to their children's education.

Concluding Reflections

After many hours of conversation with the participants, the weavers in this study, we have come to a deeper understanding of the meaning of their early school experiences. They have given the style of teaching and the way of learning they experienced during those years authenticity. Banyan Tree School, like a spreading banyan tree, provided them with shelter, giving them a safe place to play, to explore, to think, to discover, to learn; anchored them in their learning, allowing its roots to run deep in them; and fostered their continued growth in many directions, enabling them each in their unique way to be learners always. Although the findings revealed in this study, are not new to education, they bring significance to these words of T.S. Eliot,

> We shall not cease from exploration
> And the end of our exploring
> Will be to arrive where we started
> And to know the place for the first time.

Suggestions for Further Research

As this thesis is brought to a close, several questions have emerged which need to be considered in further research. These questions relate to educational research that will directly help children and teachers in the educative process.

- How can teaching practices be brought more in line with the nature of children and the way they learn? What kinds of preservice and inservice experiences would accomplish this? Would a mentorship program help to achieve this goal? If so, how could they be set up and when?

- How do we encourage more reflection in teachers?

- What kinds of schools will the students in the study look for when their children are ready to attend school? What expectations will the parents have of their children and of the school(s) they attend?

- This study is one that has looked back at the participant's early school experiences. We need more ongoing research on children as they actively engage in their learning in programs such as was offered at Banyan Tree School. What might such studies reveal?

REFERENCES

Berger, E. (1987). Parents as partners in education: The school and home working together. (2nd edition). Columbus, Ohio: Merrill Publishing Company.

Boorman, J. (1987). Integrating movement language and music experiences for young children. Edmonton: Publication Services, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta.

Bredekamp, S. (1987). Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Bredekamp, S. (Ed.) (1988). Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8. Expanded edition. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Brown, M. & Precious, N. (1969). The integrated day in the primary school. New York: Agathon Press, In.

Caplan, F. & T. (1974). The power of play. New York: Anchor Books.

Carson, T. (1986). Closing the gap between research and practice. Conversation as a mode of doing research. Phenomenology + Pedagogy, 4(2), 73 - 85.

Cherry, C. (1976). Creative play for the developing child. California: Fearon-Pitman Publishing, Inc.

Clark, J. (1981). The hand of Robin Squires. Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited.

Cullingford, C. (1991). The inner world of the school: Children's ideas about schools. London: Cassell Educational Limited.

Dean, J. (1992). Organising learning in the primary school. (2nd edition). London: Routledge.

Dewey, J. (1938). Experience and education. New York: Collier Books.

Dworkin, M. (1959). Dewey on education: Selections. New York: Teachers College Press.

Diem, R. (1987). Educational reform: Impacts on the classroom. Contemporary Education, 59(1), 10 - 12.

Edwards, C. (1988). School change: What is needed? Contemporary Education, 59(3), 134 - 138.

Elkind, D. (1987). Multiage grouping. Young Children, 43(1), 2.

Everett-Turner, L. (1982). Toward understanding the lived world of three beginning teachers of young children. Dissertation proposal, University of Alberta, Edmonton.

Everett-Turner, L. & Brinson, E. (1982). Free to learn. Video Tape.

Featherstone, J. (1976). What schools can do. New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation.

Finkelstein, B. (1984). Literature review: Incorporating children into the history of education. The Journal of Educational Thought, 18(1), 21 - 41.

Firestone, W.A. (1987). Meaning in method: The rhetoric of quantitative and qualitative researcher. Educational Researcher, 16(7), 16 - 21.

Gadamer, H. (1975). Truth and method. New York: Seabury Press.

Gaffield, C. (1986). Coherence and chaos in educational historiography. Interchange, 17(2), 112 - 121.

Garvey, C. (1977). Play. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Geertz, C. (1973). Interpretation of cultures. New York: Basic Books.

Glaser, B. & Strauss, A. (1967). The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research. Chicago: Aldine Publishing.

Goodlad, J. (1984a). A place called school. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.

Goodlad, J. (1984b). A place called school. Taped address to Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Goodlad, J., Klein, F., & Associates. (1970). Behind the classroom door. Callifornia: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Goodlad, J., Klein, F., & Associates. (1974). Looking behind the classroom door. California: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Goodlad, J., Klein, F., Novotney, J., & Tye, K. (1974). Towards a mankind school: an adventure in humanistic education. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.

Greenberg, P. (1987). Lucy Sprague Mitchell: A major missing link between early childhood education in the 1980's and progressive education in the 1890's - 1930's. Young Children, 42(5), 70 - 84.

Guba, E. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trust-worthiness of naturalistic inquiries. (ERIC/ECTJ Annual Review Paper). Indiana University.

Heron, R., & Sutton Smith, B. (1971). Child's play. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Hutchings, P. & Wertzdorff, A. (Eds.) (1988). Experiential learning across the curriculum: Assumptions and principles. New Directions For Teaching and Learning, 35, 5 - 19.

Johnson, J., Christie, J. & Yawkey. (1987). Play and early childhood development. Illinois: Scott Foresman and Company.

Kanton, R. (1988). Creating school meaning in pre-school curriculum. Theory Into Practice. 27(1), 25 - 35.

Katz, L. & Chard, S. (1981). Engaging children's minds: the project approach. New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Cooporation.

Katz, L., Evangelou, D., & Hartman, J. (1990). The case for mixed-age grouping in early education. Washington: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Klein, E.L., Kanton, R., & Fernie, D.E. (1988). What do young children know about school? Young Children, 43(5), 32 - 39.

Kotre, J. (1984). Outliving the self: Generativity and the interpretation of lives. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Lanbeck, S. (1988). Roads to school. Theory Into Practice, 27(1), 11 - 18.

Manning, K. & Sharp, A. (1977). Structuring play in the early years at school. London: Ward Lock Educational.

Maskun, P. (Ed.) (1974). Play: children's business. Washington: Association for Childhood Education International.

Mishler, E. (1979). Meaning into content: Is there any other kind? Harvard Educational Review, 49(1), 1 - 19.

Plowden Committee Report. (1967). Children and their primary schools. (Vol. 1). London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office.

Pluckrose, H. (1979). Children in their primary schools. Middlesex, England: Penquin Books.

Pratt, B. (1987). Definitions of play. Unpublished manuscript.

Rainey, A.R. (1977). Weaving without a loom. New Jersey: Prentice-hall, Inc.

Reifel, S. (1988). Children's thinking about their early school experiences. Theory Into Practice, 27(1), 62 - 66.

Reynolds, K. (1990). Curriculum in a new weave. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Alberta, Edmonton.

Roberts, V. (1971). Playing, learning and living. London: A & C Black Ltd.

Rogers, V. (1971). Teaching in the british infant schools. New York: The Macmillan Company.

Rosenholtz, S. & Simpson, C. (1984). Classroom organization and student stratification. Elementary School Journal, 81(1), 21-36.

Shor, I. (Ed.) (1987). Freire for the classroom. Portsmouth: Heinemann Educational Books. Inc.

Sponseller, D. (Ed.) (1974). Play as a learning medium. Washington: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Spradley, J.P. (1979). The ethnographic interview. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Stephens, L. (1974). The teacher's guide to open education. New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston.

Strom, R., (1981). Growing through play. California: Brooks/Cole publishing Company.

van Manen, M. (1990). Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy. London, Ontario: Althouse Press.

Ulich, R. (1945). History of educational thought. New York: American Book Company.

Ulich, R. (Ed) (1961). Three thousand years of educational wisdom. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Weber, S. (1985). *Teacher educators: A search for meaning*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Alberta, Edmonton.

Werner, W. (1977, November). *Evaluation: Sense making of school programs*. Paper presented at a CUFA Symposium, the Annual Conference of the National Council for Social Studies, Cincinnati, OH.

Whitehead, A.N. (1957). *The aims of education*. New York: The Free Press.

Zaret, E. (1986). The uncertainty principle in curriculum planning. *Theory Into Practice*, 25(1), 46 - 52.

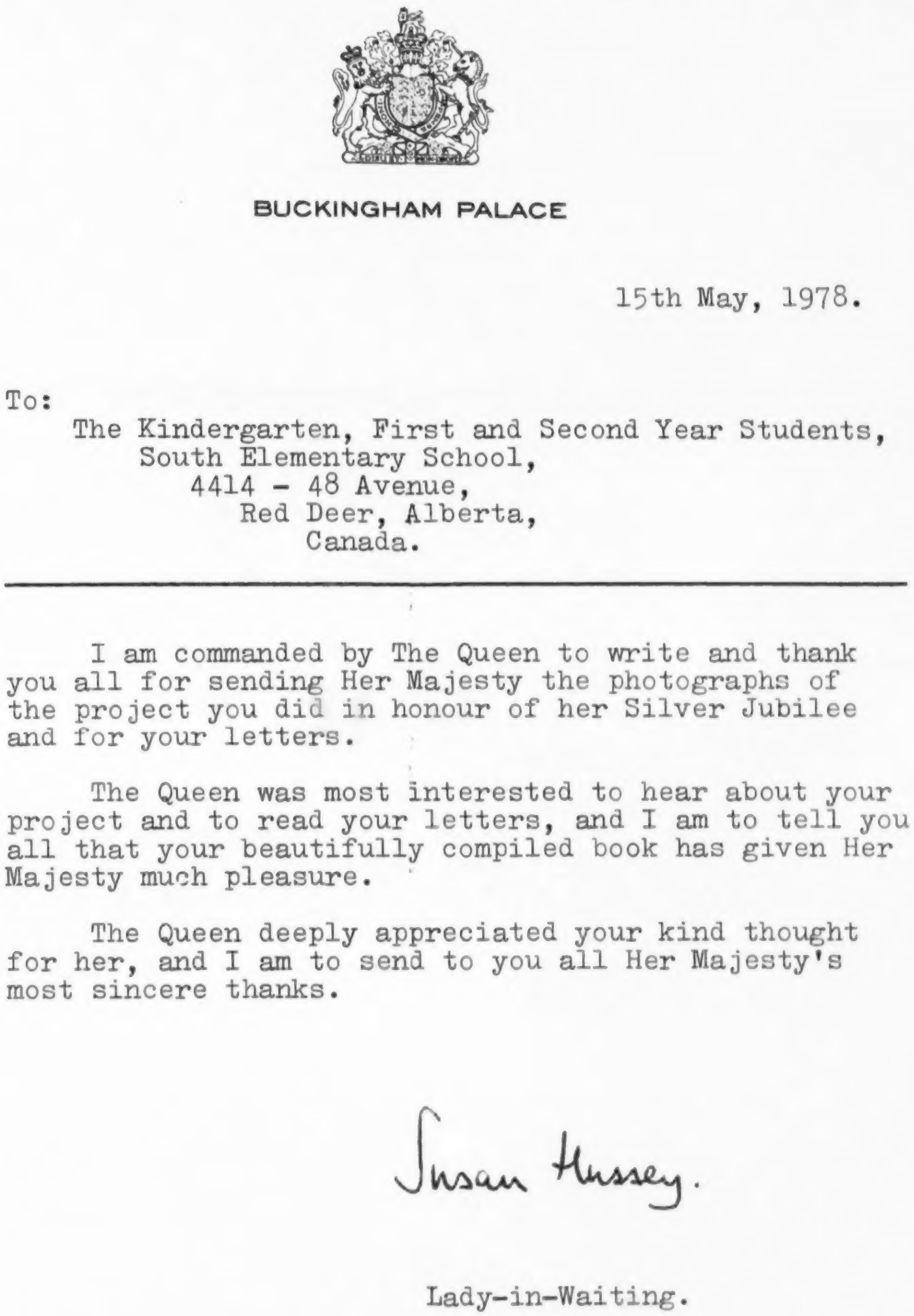
Appendix A

Criteria for Assuring Trustworthiness of the Study	Components of Criteria	Steps Taken In Study To Assure Trustworthiness
Credibility	- prolonged engagement at a site: to overcome, as much as possible, distortions re: presence of researcher	- prior knowledge of students and parents
	- persistent observation (in my study conversations) to be able to identify pertinent qualities and atypical characteristics	- conversations set up with each participant until a complete as possible understanding of their school experiences (students) and perceptions of them (parents) was established
	- peer debriefing: to to give researcher opportunity to check his/herself to inquiries of the study to his/her peers	- regular debriefing sessions held: with advisor, any interested graduate students, and other colleagues
	- triangulation: various data sources, different theories, references, and other pertinent methods pitted against one another in order to check data and interpretations. (information items need 2 source verification)	- information collected via conversations and references. A number of references will be utilized to check on data collected and its interpretation.

Criteria for Assuring Trustworthiness of the Study	Components of Criteria	Steps Taken In Study To Assure Trustworthiness
	- collection of referential adequacy materials: documents, video-tapings, audio recordings, collected against which findings and interpretations can later be tested	- all participant's conversations tape recorded
	- member checks	- summary of conversations shared with participants
Transferability	- collect "thick" description:	- from tapes
Dependability	- overlap methods: kind of triangulation process - different methods used in tandem	- use of conversations for data collections. The study included the students (in order to uncover the meaning of their school experience); and their parents (to obtain the perceptions of their child's early school experiences).
	- sidewise replication: two "separate research teams" deal separately with data sources to double check developing insights and decide on appropriate next step(s)	- on regular basis advisor read data collected - an outside reader read through transcripts of tapes to check the ongoing analysis of the data

Criteria for Assuring Trustworthiness of the Study	Components of Criteria	Steps Taken In Study To Assure Trustworthiness
	- establish an "audit trail": (written documentation) to make it possible to have a person external to study to examine processes used to collect, analyze and interpret data	- transcripts and summaries of each tape available, - read by outside reader
	- arrange for a "dependability" audit: a competant person to ascertain the correct procedures for the study	- monitored by advisor
Confirmability (re: data and its analysis	- triangulation: (already noted under credibility)	- see credibility section
		- use of outside reader
	- practicing reflexivity - to reveal researcher's underlying epistemological assumptions which lead to formulation of questions and presentation of findings	- introspections shared verbally with advisor, my reader, colleagues
	- arrange for a "confirmability" audit: confirms that data exists for every analysis made and that analyses made are consistent with available data: extensive documentation needed	- checked by advisor, reader

Appendix B



BUCKINGHAM PALACE

15th May, 1978.

To:
The Kindergarten, First and Second Year Students,
South Elementary School,
4414 - 48 Avenue,
Red Deer, Alberta,
Canada.

I am commanded by The Queen to write and thank you all for sending Her Majesty the photographs of the project you did in honour of her Silver Jubilee and for your letters.

The Queen was most interested to hear about your project and to read your letters, and I am to tell you all that your beautifully compiled book has given Her Majesty much pleasure.

The Queen deeply appreciated your kind thought for her, and I am to send to you all Her Majesty's most sincere thanks.

Susan Hussey.

Lady-in-Waiting.